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RED RALPH, THE RIVER ROVER: or, THE BROTHER'S REVENGE.

BY NED BUNTLINE.



SUDDENLY THE WHIZ OF AN ARROW WAS HEARD, AND THE ARM OF THE WRETCH WAS LITERALLY PINNED TO THE TREE.

Red Ralph, THE RIVER ROVER;

OR,
The Brother's Revenge.

BY NED BUNTLINE.

CHAPTER I.

"GO; HENCEFORTH YOU ARE NO SON OF MINE."

It was a beautiful place, that of Edgar Rolfe, situated upon the banks of the James river, chosen by his father, when hand-in-hand he roamed through the forest with the noble-hearted and queenly Pocahontas, whom he married, and who died but too soon after she gave birth to her only son.

In time the father passed away leaving his son sole heir to his large estate, which through his care had become one of the most beautiful and profitable in Virginia. That son grew up, proud and haughty, with all the fire of his mother's princely blood in his veins, and the stern and haughty resolution of his father.

The son married young, finding in the daughter of a neighboring planter, soon after his father's death, one who could make the mansion less desolate and his heart more warm. The second son of this marriage, Eugene Rolfe, is the principal hero of the following story. He was at that age when youth has just merged into a full consciousness of manhood. He was tall, well-formed, his frame lithe, but muscular—his features and his brunette complexion plainly showing traces of his maternal descent. His eye of jet-black, at one time would be soft and liquid as a drop of water in a flower-cup—at another, lighted by excitement, it would flash like a diamond in a blaze of light. His nature did not seem so stern as that of his sire, and he differed from his aristocratic elder brother as much as daylight differs from darkness. Nor was there less difference between his nature and that of his sister, who then but eighteen, was two years younger than himself. She was not only haughty, but sordid, quarrelsome, ungenerous.

Reared with spirits so uncongenial, it would not seem unnatural if he met those more like himself away from the old homestead, that with them he should form intimacies and attachments stronger than he had at home. And Eugene Rolfe had formed such an intimacy, and, as his brother and sister thought, with those who were far beneath them in station. It is true, they were so in wealth; but if purity of blood, probity of character, and a descent from one of the oldest and proudest families in France were considered, the Miniers stood second to none in the province of Virginia. Yet they had not had the means to settle as well nor cultivate as largely as their more fortunate neighbors, nor had their children the same chance for education at select schools and foreign universities as others. But they were not utterly neglected, as the sequel will show.

Adolphe Minier and his wife, Felicite, were blessed with but two children—Gustave, a boy of the same age as Eugene Rolfe, Mignonette, their daughter, a flower even more beautiful than her namesake, two years younger than the son—in truth, of the same age, within a few days, as Irene Rolfe.

The son was a bold, brave, adventurous boy—one who, with gun in hand, was ever in the woods, roaming through the forest, which then was almost pathless. He was as much attached to Eugene Rolfe as one boy could be to another, although he was more rude and uncultivated. But a warmer heart never beat in human bosom than throbbed in his—a more courageous youth never faced a foe.

His sister was all tenderness, all love, all gentleness. If a form to which nothing could be added or ought taken away without marring its perfection; if a face whose complexion was almost transparent; if eyes darkly, beautifully blue and liquid as a violet's in the dewy morn—if hair like sunbeams twisted into waving, golden curls, could constitute beauty, then was Mignonette very beautiful. Eugene thought that she was, for from her childhood he had watched her beauty expanding, and he almost worshiped her. She had been far better educated than her brother, for Eugene had taught her his lessons, and what he had learned he had imparted to her. Thus even in her childhood she had literally become a part of himself.

In front of Mr. Rolfe's mansion, a park of large oak trees extended quite down to the edge of the river, where beside the grassy bank, several neat canoes, shaped by the hands of the skillful natives were moored. Out in the river a short distance, a neat sailing shallop, or pleasure boat lay at anchor, swaying to the current, for the breeze was so light that it scarcely lifted the little red and blue pennant which was hoisted at its mast-head. Up and down the broad and beautiful river, canoes might occasionally be seen paddled by the copper-hued natives as they gathered oysters or caught the bright-scaled fish. Flocks of wild ducks floated to and fro, scarcely swimming out of the way of the swift canoe.

It was summer-time, the year 1753. So warm was the weather that the tame deer which roamed undisturbed through the park, stood half immersed in the edge of the river in the shade of the broad spreading limbs of the large oaks. The sun had passed its meridian, when a man who had passed the meridian of the days usually allotted to man—for his locks once a glossy black were now silvering in

spots—accompanied by one many years his junior, approached a rustic bench near the water-side and seated himself. One was the elder Rolfe—the other was Eugene.

"I say again"—continued the father, who had been conversing earnestly with his son as they approached the spot—"that you must choose a profession. I can get you a commission in the army or a position in the navy of his majesty!"

"But suppose, dear father," replied the young man mildly, "that I do not feel anxious for either. Suppose that I prefer to live as you have lived and become an independent planter?"

"I will not suppose such a thing, Eugene!" said the father firmly. "The plantation will fall to your brother, according to the law of inheritance—*le*—" the father hesitated, but the son finished the remark according to his own interpretation.

"Would not like to share a part with me, you would say, father. I know that, but I can start up on a plantation without his assistance, nor would I accept his aid if he offered it. He loves me not—would, if he *dared*, treat me as meanly as the commonest varlet."

"Softly, my son—Francis is haughty in his nature but he is not at heart unkind. Only this morning he was speaking most kindly of you."

"Yes, father, and probably suggesting that it would be better to send me off across the ocean to get a commission in a service where a *chance* bullet might make one less in the family! I will wager my favorite horse against a donkey that it was he who put this idea of sending me abroad, into your mind!"

The elder Rolfe was silent—he could not deny Eugene's inference.

"I know several of his reasons for wishing me out of his way," continued the latter, "*one* in particular, but *that* reason alone, more than all others, would induce me to stay."

At that moment, a light canoe impelled by a powerful arm, shot out from a small creek nearly opposite to them on the other side of the river. There were two persons in it, one evidently a female. The course of the boat was angularly across the river, its prow pointing a little above the spot where the two speakers were seated. If the father had glanced at the face of his son, when his eye first caught sight of the canoe, he would have seen a quick but transient flush pass over his fine manly features.

"Are not those the Miniers?" asked the elder Rolfe, as the canoe brought them rapidly nearer and within a recognizable distance.

"They are, sir," Eugene answered.

"They remind that your brother said that lately you had become very intimate with that family!" said the father sternly.

"Not more so, sir, than I have been since my childhood!" responded Eugene, and as the flush of anger rose up and mantled both cheek and brow, he added—"if I were, it is no business of my brother's—he is not my keeper. If the truth were known he would be glad to have the beautiful Mignonette smile upon him!"

At that moment, the young girl who had been looking toward the shore, seemed to recognize them and the brother evidently at her request turned the prow of the canoe a trifle more down the stream. This brought it within about fifty or sixty yards of the shore, when again with a dexterous turn of the paddle the rower headed it more up the stream.

Eugene arose, and walked down to the bank and hailed young Minier.

"Where away this sunny day, Gustave?"

"I am going with my sister up to the old settlement to gather some grapes, sir," replied young Minier in a full manly voice. "They are ripe and very fine—will you not go along?"

"Not now—I may ride up there by and by!" replied Eugene. "How is the fair Mignonette to-day?"

"Well and happy!" cried a voice as sweet and soft as the tones of a flute heard at eve, across the waters.

"She is very beautiful!" muttered the elder Rolfe to himself. "It must be as Francis says. This intimacy must be stopped before it goes too far!"

The canoe was soon out of sight in the deep shadows of the trees up the river, and Eugene returned to his father.

"That Minier girl is very good-looking," said the father, apparently in a careless manner, but his eye now noted the expression of his son's face.

"She is, and as good as she is beautiful," said the young man, earnestly.

"Perhaps so," said the father, in a sarcastic tone. "She may seem fair and good, but still be rotten at the core."

"Sir!" cried the youth, turning pale with anger.

"Sir, were any other man than my father to make such an insinuation I would strike him dead at my feet. This I expect is more of my brother's work. He had better beware or he may make me forget that the same blood flows in our veins. Good-day, sir."

So saying, Eugene turned haughtily away and strode off in the direction of the mansion.

For a few moments the sire sat in silence, apparently astonished. Then the angry blood mounted to his own brow, and, as he rose to his feet, he exclaimed, bitterly:

"Things have gone thus far, have they? The reckless boy dares for a pretty menial to insult his own father. He *shall* take a commission and obey my mandates or I'll turn him from my door as penniless as she is! Francis was right, he is always right!"

"What was you saying about my dear brother Francis, father?" asked a female voice close by his side. So noiseless had been the approach of his daughter that he had not heard her.

"Nothing in particular, my sweet child," he replied, while his frown relaxed into a smile.

Irene Rolfe would have been pretty if the expression of her face had not indicated her disposition. She was small, but neatly formed, of graceful figure and good features; but there was something indefinable, hard to describe, which would not impress an observant person favorably upon meeting her.

"What was the matter with Eugene, father?" she continued.

"Eugene is a fool," replied the father—his face again flushing. "I did but allude to that pert hussy, the daughter of old Minier, the Frenchman, and he flew into a passion. I shall send him to England to enter the army," he added, after a short pause.

"It will be a good place for one of his ungovernable temper!" said the thoughtful sister.

"And will tear him away from these degrading associations!" continued Mr. Rolfe.

"Very true, dear father—but will he go?"

"Will he go, did you ask, Irene? Will he go? He has not yet arrived at an age when he dares to refuse obedience to me. If he did I would drive him a beggar from my presence. He dare not cross my will."

"He is very willful, father, and has ever been so! But where is he going now? I see him riding along the lane that leads up to the river."

"Going to meet the Miniers I expect!" said the father. "A curse on them and their breed. Where is your brother, Francis, child?"

"He rode out about two hours ago, father, to look over the plantation. He always does, you know, to see that the hands are at work and no waste going on!"

"Yes—he is an attentive boy. He does well to look over the place—it will soon be his to look to all together."

"It is our lunch-time nearly, dear father; will you go up to the house now? 'Twas for that I came to call you."

"You were kind and attentive, Irene; if I am cursed by one willful and disobedient child, I have reason to be very grateful for two that are affectionate and ever thoughtful."

The father and daughter now went up arm-in-arm to the old mansion, which was built in the old style, only two stories high, with a broad veranda extending all around it. Entering the sitting-room, they were met by one whom we have not yet introduced, Mrs. Rolfe. She was a pale, meek-looking woman, one who did not appear to enjoy good health, although if she suffered mentally or bodily, she would keep her suffering to herself. The resemblance between herself and Eugene was striking in some respects. But there was not the color in her cheek, or the fire in her eye that flashed in his.

She rose as her husband entered the room, and was about to speak, when a hurried step was heard on the veranda, and as she glanced to the door, her face blanched whiter than before, and with a faint scream she sunk back upon her seat. Mr. Rolfe turned to see what was the object of her alarm, and beheld his eldest son entering the room in anything but fine condition. His face and clothes were covered with blood which was streaming from his nose, and one of his eyes could scarcely be seen, and it was encircled with mourning for its mishap.

"What is the matter—how were you hurt?" exclaimed both father and sister in a breath.

"Eugene has beaten me, but his heart's blood shall pay for it!" said the brother hoarsely.

"Infamous! What caused him to do the brutal act?" asked the father.

"Merely some words which I addressed to the sister of young Minier, who was trespassing on our land," replied Francis.

"There—I thought so! Eugene is perfectly infuriated with the upstart jade!" said Irene.

"Let me wash your face and apply some lotion, my son," said the mother kindly, she having now recovered from her first fright.

"No—you needn't trouble yourself about me—you can reserve your care for your *pet*, Eugene, after I have paid him up for this assault!" cried Francis brutally.

"Francis—Francis, you should remember that I am your *mother*!" said the lady, with more spirit than she had shown before.

"I won't forget that you are Eugene's mother, and that *he* is your favorite!" savagely responded the unfeeling son.

"Beware, sir, how you speak to my mother!" said a deep voice at his back. "I have chastised you once to-day for insulting a woman, who as yet is no relation of mine. Do not force me to utterly forget that *you* are related to me."

Every spot on the face of Francis which was not covered with blood turned pale, and his whole frame trembled. It was evident that he, like all things in the shape of men who can abuse a woman, was a dastardly coward.

"How dare you abuse your brother so?" shouted the elder Rolfe, seeing that Francis made no reply.

"How can *you*, sir, permit him in your presence to insult *my* mother and your wife?" asked Eugene calmly, as he stepped forward.

"Oh dear, this is excruciating!" cried Irene.

"If you cannot keep your hands off your brother," cried the father, "you need not consider this house your home!"

"I shall not much longer, sir!" said Eugene proudly. "Had it not been for my poor suffering mother I should not have remained, to be insulted and vexed by an unnatural brother and sister as I have been."

"Oh, Eugene!" hysterically cried Irene—pretending to sob quite bitterly, though no tear-drops forced

themselves out between the jeweled fingers which she held before her face.

"Go to your room, Francis, my dear boy—I will have a surgeon sent for," said the father.

"Eugene had better look out or he'll need one before I do!" replied Francis bitterly, as he withdrew from the room.

"You may have courage enough to play the assassin," said the other calmly—"but I do not fear you."

"I command you to go to your room and to stay there until I decide what to do in regard to this matter," cried the father.

"Excuse me, sir—if for the first time in my life I deliberately tell you that I will not obey you!" replied Eugene.

"Oh my son, for my sake be calm and do not anger your father," murmured the mother, her eye glittering with tears.

"Mother, dear mother, for you I would do anything, everything! For your sake I have borne wrong and insult until forbearance has ceased to be a virtue. This day my father was proposing to send me far away from you, where I could neither protect you or cheer you when sorrowful. But I will save him the trouble! I will leave this house, sir, and no longer trouble you or my affectionate sister and brother. But woe be to those who offer harm to, or draw one precious tear from the eyes of my mother!"

"Rash boy, if you leave this house you go forth as a beggar!"

"Not quite, sir. I have five hundred pounds of my own, which my grandfather left me—"

"And which you cannot touch until you are twenty-one—a year yet—and I am your guardian!"

"If you choose, sir, to defraud me of my rights, do so—I have strong hands, a willing heart, and do not think there is any danger of starvation while I possess them!"

The father's face became livid with rage—he gasped for utterance—but was too choked to speak. With unsteady steps, like one reeling from drunkenness, he left the room, followed by Irene, who had suddenly recovered from her hysterical fit.

The tears of Mrs. Rolfe now fell hot and fast.

"Dear mother!" said Eugene, seating himself by her side and putting his arm fondly around her neck, "do not weep. I love you very dearly—but I could not bear everything. Francis has often provoked me almost beyond endurance and I have borne it—but he abused the only being in the world who shared my heart with you and I could not stand it. I am going away, mother, but not so far that I cannot hear from you often. Within the last half-hour I have made up my mind—"

"And now you can execute your plans!" said the elder Rolfe, returning with a package which he threw at the feet of his son. "There, sir, is the amount of your grandfather's bequest; you shall not say that a Rolfe defrauded you! Go, henceforth you are no son of mine!"

"I do not thank you, because this is my right," proudly replied the son as he placed the money in his pocket. "Farewell dear mother," he added, "you will hear from your son, at times!"

One glance of agony flew from her to him—then he was gone, and she sunk back senseless upon the floor.

CHAPTER II.

BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER.

AFTER leaving his father by the water-side, Eugene had passed on to the stable and ordering his favorite horse saddled, mounted it and rode off up the river. His face was still flushed, his system nervous, and his mind agitated. He passed swiftly on beneath the huge oaks, now glancing through the openings toward the river, then spurring more rapidly forward. He had ridden perhaps a mile, or even more and had not yet passed the boundary of his father's estate, when the sound of loud and angry voices fell upon his ear. At first he checked his horse to ascertain from whence the sound came. It seemed to emanate from a thick growth of oak and persimmon trees, to his right. But the trees were so completely laden with wild grape vines, from which depended clusters of the delicious blue grapes that he could not see the speakers. But when he heard the voice of a lady speaking in tones of terror and entreaty, he did not hesitate a second in his intention of becoming one in the party. Driving his spurs home and bowing his head down upon the animal's neck to avoid the overhanging branches, he burst through the thicket and came most unexpectedly upon the scene of excitement. There were four persons there—his brother Francis and a huge brutal negro who usually accompanied the latter on his excursions over the plantation, and to whom, for his own reasons, he gave unusual liberties. Opposite to these two, stood young Minier, his face flushed, his fists clinched, his dark eye flashing—his whole appearance indicative of anger and excitement. In the rear, her face suffused with blushes and tears, stood Mignonette, appearing the picture of terror. The attitude of Francis and the negro showed that an attack upon Gustave Minier was intended.

"What does this mean?" shouted Eugene, as he placed his horse at a bound between the parties. "Speak, Gustave, for I know you will tell the truth."

"While I was absent, carrying a basket of grapes down to the canoe, that villain—I must call him a villain if he is your brother, Eugene—insulted my sister. See, he tore the bonnet from her head—I heard her scream and if you had not come I don't know but I should have made some of his blood atone for the insult. But for your sake I'll say no more—though if ever he dares to even as much as

speak to my sister again, I'll send an ounce of lead through his base heart!"

Eugene dismounted, while Gustave was speaking, his face growing as rigid and pallid as snow as he did so.

"Slave," he said, sternly, addressing the negro who stood by the side of Francis, "hold this horse!" The negro looked irresolutely at his own master and hesitated to obey.

"Did you hear me?" said Eugene, drawing a pistol from his breast and taking aim at the black rascal.

"Yes, massa—for God's sake don't shoot!" cried the negro, turning from black to a bluish gray in the face, as he hastened to take the horse by the head.

Eugene replaced the pistol, then advanced coolly to Francis, who, pale with anger and yet confused, stood quivering before him.

"Sir," said Eugene—"brother I will not call you—the epithet of villain, which Gustave Minier applied to you, was just—you deserve it for your black-hearted attack upon his sister. Will you try to redeem your honor as a gentleman by giving him the satisfaction of a man? If you will, I will be his friend and you may seek another."

"When I fight I fight with my equals," said the brother, with a sneer.

"Your equal cannot be found, you dastardly coward."

The elder brother, maddened by this retort, raised his riding-whip to strike Eugene, but the latter with a single bound sprung inside of the intended blow, and quick as thought, striking with both his clinched hands, knocked the ruffian back bleeding upon the ground. Blood gushed from his mouth and nose and he made no effort to rise and return them.

Eugene then turned to Mignonette to calm and quiet her, and to assure her that he would protect her while he had an arm to use in her defense. He received her thanks, and a hearty shake of the hand from her brother, who said:

"I'm sorry that you didn't let me dress him out, Eugene; I was just going into him when you came up. I'm afraid it may give you trouble at home."

"I do not fear it," was the reply of Eugene. "I intend leaving there at any rate."

"What, are you going away?" asked Mignonette as the returning color suddenly again left her cheeks.

"Not far from you, sweet lady!" he replied—"but as to living longer under the same roof with yonder dastard, I will not. But if you have got recomposed I will see you and your brother to your boat, for I must return to the mansion to make my arrangements for leaving."

"Come to our house to stay!" said Gustave. "It is a humble home, but you will be as welcome as if it were a palace, and as much honored beneath its roof as if you were a king."

"I will at least pass the night there!" said Eugene. "I wish your good parents' advice as to my future course."

Eugene now accompanied the young couple to their boat, and then returned to where he had left his horse. The horse was tied to a bush—but the negro and Francis had disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOME OF THE MINIER—A CLOSE CALL.

THE home of Adolphe and Felicite Minier and their children was not only situated in a beautiful spot, but was in itself the perfection of architectural beauty, combined with simplicity. It was of the Swiss-cottage order, continued with the French, Americanized by having a neat veranda extending entirely around it, as is the case with most buildings in the South. A lattice of flowering vines completely curtained this veranda, except at the entrances, creeping up over the roof as if determined to hide the dwelling from the eyes of a too curious and too heartless a world. The few outbuildings and the little ground which, with the help of his son and a couple of house-servants, Minier could cultivate, all bore the same marks of neatness and good taste. The stock, consisting of a few horses and cattle, looked as if they too had been well cared for. And yet, it could be seen that Adolphe was poor compared to his neighbors, by the small scale on which he operated.

But beautiful as all was outside of the cottage which, by the side of a small, clear bayou which led to the river, was nestled in the protecting shade of some umbrageous oaks, it was excelled by the neatness within.

Eugene Rolfe, on parting with Gustave and Mignonette at the river-side, had promised to go to their parents' house that night, and before the sun had kissed the pale brow of twilight, and gone away from one part of the earth to warm another, they were out on the side of the veranda facing the water, listening for his coming.

But the night-shadows had come, and the stars looked down with twinkling eyes upon the quiet scene, and he came not. The *to-hoot-to-hew* of the owl, the singing of the tree-toad, and the lonely wail of that bird whose note is seldom heard but at night, the whip-poor-will, could be heard, but not the plash of the paddle for which sweet Mignonette then listened, as she often had before.

"I wonder what keeps Eugene back?" said Gustave.

"He may be detained by his father—or perhaps," and her cheek paled as the last thought suggested itself, "he may have had further trouble with his brother!" said Mignonette.

But their remarks were cut short by the sound of a paddle, and in a few moments a small canoe came swiftly up the bayou and landed by the grassy bank in front of the house. And the rays of the moon which was just rising threw light upon the tall, graceful form of Eugene.

He was equipped as for travel. A knapsack was at his back, pistols and knife were in his belt, and a short, heavy rifle of very large bore, such as are used with such unerring aim by the Swiss chamois-hunters, was in his hand. He was followed, too, by a favorite dog, a cross between the hound and mastiff, fleet of foot and of powerful build. His step was firm, but his look was anxious and care-worn.

"Welcome, my young friend, welcome!" said Mr. Minier as Eugene approached.

Before Eugene could speak Gustave was by his side, warmly pressing his hand, and the little hand of Mignonette was also pressed within his palm.

"You look as if you intend going upon a journey?" continued the elder Minier.

"I am. I have left my father's house forever," said Eugene hastily.

"But you go not hence to-night—take off that knapsack, lay down your rifle. If after consideration you will go away, you may have my head for a plaything if I don't go with you!" cried Gustave. "It was for me and sister that you got into the quarrel, and I'll see you out of it, sure as my name is Gus Minier."

"Come in, come in, my dear boy, and let us talk over this matter," said Mr. Minier, addressing Eugene. "Your brother is unlike your father; he at least has some noble traits."

"But your mother, your dear mother. It will kill her to lose you," said Mrs. Minier.

A shadow of anguish crossed his pale brow as he replied:

"I feel deeply for her, madam, but my stay will not lessen her sorrows. It pains her to see me imposed upon by those whose blood at least should make them love me. She is an angel, mother, and wherever I go her prayers and blessings will go with me."

He had by this time taken off his equipments, and turning to Mignonette, who had remained silent all this time, he seated himself by her side, and taking her hand in his, whispered words of undying love. Let not the reader suppose that all he said was overheard by the others. Mr. Minier and his son were engaged in conversation, and Mrs. Minier had gone into the house to give directions in regard to the evening repast, which on pleasant evenings was served out on the veranda.

Soft and low toned were the words which Eugene whispered in her ear, but they were such as gave life to her heart, such as thrilled her very soul. He was telling her not only of his love, but of his intention to ask her hand from her parents, and if he gained their consent, to go somewhere into the interior to some lonely spot not marred by the hand of man and there to build for her a home—a home wherein naught but joy and happiness could find a dwelling-place. He told her that with the exception of his grandfather's legacy he had nothing—but that was enough for him with his strong frame and bold brave heart to begin the world with.

Tea was prepared, and our lovers, for such they truly were, were aroused from the romance of their situation to the reality of corn cakes, coffee and chicken fixings.

An hour later the table was cleared—Mr. Minier and Gustave had sat down to play a game of chess—Mrs. Minier was near them with her lace-bobbins in her hand, knitting—and Mignonette was seated on the veranda in a flood of golden moonlight, with Eugene by her side, still clasping her hand in his—still pouring fond words into her willing ear.

His eyes were upon her face, yet hers were too timid to meet his impassioned glance, and they wandered out into the deep shadows of the woods, or on the green velvet of the lawn. Well it was for him that her glance had wandered thus, for suddenly she saw a dark shadow cross a wake of moonlight—then her quick eye discerned a tall form raising a weapon, the deadly barrel of which glittered in the moon-rays.

With a wild scream she sprung from her seat, and drew Eugene by almost superhuman strength within the veranda at the same moment a ball grazed his cheek so closely that it cut a seam in it from which the blood gushed out, while it also severed one of the golden curls from her head. The echo of the piece had hardly rung forth in the woods when Thunderbolt, Eugene's dog, with a fierce growl dashed off in the direction from which the shot came.

In an instant Eugene had recovered from the shock, and accompanied by Mr. Minier and Gustave, all with arms which they had hurriedly snatched up, rushed after the dog. In a few moments they heard his growl cease, then the cry of a man in terror and anger, then in agony, and in a few seconds they had reached an open spot in the woods where Thunderbolt held a huge and powerful man on the ground, his teeth fixed in the fellow's throat.

Eugene ordered the dog to release his victim, and while he held his gun at the villain's breast, he recognized him to be the same negro belonging to his brother whom we have before described.

"Wretch!" shouted Eugene. "Who sent you to assassinate me? Speak before I blow your soul into eternal perdition!"

"Don't kill me, Massa 'Gene! Don't kill me an' I tell," cried the negro.

"Speak quick, you infernal hound! Out with it," "Massa Francis, sah. He make me free and gib me plenty money s'pose me kill Massa 'Gene," said the negro.

"Shoot the black imp of Satan," cried Gustave, "and then let me go and knock your brother in the head."

"No," said Eugene, "he must live—both of them must. But I'll put my mark on you, Tony—so that your master will remember me when he sees you."

So saying he drew his knife, and while the negro

lay cowering at his feet, he drew it across his forehead twice making an incision to the bone, in the shape of a cross.

"Now, up, you black dog," he cried, "and go to your master and tell him that neither he nor any of his minions can hurt me. Begone—you need not look for your gun, I shall take care of that. Make tracks in a hurry, or I'll let Thunderbolt take another hold."

The negro needed no second bidding, but with a look of mingled fear and hatred made more hideous by the blood which streamed over his mutilated face, he fled from the spot.

"Now what do you think of my brother?" asked Eugene, after the black had vanished from their view.

"That he is infamous beyond belief! His treacherous design ought at once to be made public and he consigned to justice," said Mr. Minier.

"Two reasons will prevent it," replied Eugene. "In the first place I would not have my family name disgraced by making public such a shameful act of one of its members. Next, the evidence of the negro you know is valueless in court, even if I desired to use it. My brother will be punished by the failure of his scheme."

"If by your leniency he is not encouraged to try some other plan," said Gustave. "You'd better let me take care of him—I'll give him a fair chance for his life. The insult to Mignonette is excuse enough for a challenge."

"Thank you, dear Gustave," replied Eugene, smiling at the enthusiastic manner of young Minier. "I can punish him sufficiently."

When they returned to the house, they found Mignonette pale and anxiously awaiting, with her mother, their report.

The story was soon told. The ladies were horrified at the depravity of Francis Rolfe.

"To you, dear Mignonette, I owe my life," said Eugene. "That negro is one of the most skillful shots that I ever saw. Had you not seen him when you did, he would surely have executed his master's wishes."

"God is good! It was His will that you should not be destroyed," she answered, with tears of joy in her eyes.

"He is indeed good, for he made one of his angels my guardian," said Eugene, as he pressed the hand which he held to his lips.

"What were your intentions and what did you mean to do?" asked the elder Minier after they had once more seated themselves within the cottage.

"I intend to ask your advice. You have ever been like kind parents to me," said Eugene.

"But you surely had some plan in your mind."

"None which I did not intend should have your sanction, sir. Although I have thrown off all allegiance to my own father, I do not feel that I am fully competent in all things to act without advice and guidance. And besides—I did not know but that my plans might coincide with some of your own. I have often heard you express an intention of removing further inland, where the land was richer and unpleasant neighbors more distant."

"That is true."

"Reports have frequently reached us of late of the rich lands in the valleys of the Delaware and Susquehanna. And if you would go there—I would add my stock; it is only five hundred pounds sterling, but it would help, and if you would let me, I would be proud and happy to become one of your own family. Gustave and myself could work side by side together, we could join in the hunt, we could make ourselves and you happy and at least independent. And, sir, if you and Madame Minier would consent, two hands would be joined, where hearts have long been united. You know that from my childhood up to the present moment Mignonette and myself have loved each other. This night she has saved my life, let me devote that life to her."

"With your affections, neither my wife nor myself will ever interfere," said the father, kindly. "In regard to our removal, I have long intended it. But it would scarcely be right to burden you."

"Dear sir, such joy as you would give me by joining me in a removal to some pleasant place would be inexpressible. And when I can claim Mignonette as my bride, then can I say indeed that I am blessed."

"We will think of matters until morning and then decide. In the mean time, may the good God above guide our thoughts and guard our persons," said Mr. Minier, rising to retire.

CHAPTER IV.

A MESSAGE AND A PLOT.

THE next day the sun rose brightly over the cottage home of the Miniers, and while yet the dew-diamonds glittered on the flowers, two persons went forth to enjoy—first the sweet breath of the rosy morn—next the converse which two linked souls which know but a single hope, two united hearts which know but a single thought, can enjoy.

"Mignonette, sweet angel mine," said Eugene, as he clasped her hand within his own, "though darkness appears to shade my life-path—though every relative except my dear mother has their hand raised against me, yet all is bright and clear before me. Like the beacon which gleams at the mouth of a harbor, you stand my own sweet guiding star, and I only see happiness before me."

Mignonette sighed, looked up at him with her sweet eyes, and replied:

"Eugene, my noble love, you are bright to me, the only star to which I can look, yet dark clouds are wrapped around your form. A brother's hate, a sister's malice, a father's frown. You do not deserve them, yet I fear them for your sake."

"Dear Mignonette, fear not for me. He who has saved me thus far will protect me still. I have no fear, no tribulation, so long as I know that you are mine in heart and soul. Let the holy man of God unite us, and when the words are spoken and the vows uttered which make us twain one, then I shall feel that a new world is opened unto me, that I can look for nothing beyond."

"Dear Eugene, I cannot be happier than I am while I know that I am beloved by you, but still I must tell you that an icy foreboding, a dark shadow seems constantly to rise before me, a something to fear which I cannot see. Let us go quickly beyond the circle of its influence, far from those who would destroy you if they could."

"I will, my sweet Mignonette, but not until I can call you wife, Gustave brother, and ask your parents to bless me as their son."

"It can be done this day," said the fair girl, and she did not even blush. Why should she? Her thoughts were pure—she loved her betrothed, and who that loves purely need conceal that affection?

It was two hours later, breakfast had been attended to, and a council was being held by the Miniers and Eugene, on the same veranda where Mignonette, through her watchfulness, saved Eugene from death.

The question before that council was, when and where shall we go.

"Let it be on the morrow!" said Eugene, "with your consent and blessing, this day will see Mignonette my bride. Such things as cannot be transported hence easily, can be sold as well within a day as a week. Our means of transportation will be our boats. The course, if you would go, where I would advise, from all that I have heard, would be down the river into the Chesapeake, thence into the river which the Indians call crooked or Susquehanna, and up its bright waters until we find an abiding-place, a spot where we can rest and know the happiness which we cannot enjoy here!"

"I am not averse to the destination you propose!" said Mr. Minier calmly. "And I can see that our child is willing to cast her lot with yours for life. Yet it seems to me, my dear boy, that we are hasty. We should not hurry off like thieves in the night-time, for we have wronged no one."

"True, my father," said Mignonette, "but I fear some wrong may come to him who unto me is more than life. Therefore, I counsel a speedy departure. His enemies are wealthy and powerful we know; that they are unscrupulous, the act of last night gives proof! If we are to go hence, let us go quickly."

"I go in for the same course," said Gustave. "One day will be time enough for preparation, I should think."

"Well, let it be set for to-morrow," said the father. "And you, Eugene, shall be our pilot and guide."

"I will, sir—and now Gustave, will you do me a favor?"

"You know I would, Eugene, even if I lost my life in doing it! What shall I do?"

"Take your canoe and go over to my father's—"

"What, and give Mr. Francis Rolfe my compliments in the shape of a lump of lead? That I'd do with great pleasure."

"No—I'll not give you so much trouble. All that I wish done, is to have you say to my father and all the family, that I am to be married to your sister this evening at the set of sun. Speak kindly to my mother, and ask her to come and bless her son and his wife."

"I will speak kind to her, Eugene—but if Francis Rolfe does not keep a civil tongue in his head, he will learn a new lesson from me. I'll go right away."

"After you have carried that message," said his father, "you can go to the different planters in the neighborhood and tell them that we are about to remove, and I have some things which I can dispose of."

Gustave hastened off with his messages.

The sun was not four hours high when young Minier reached the house of Mr. Rolfe. One of the servants, by his command, informed Mr. Rolfe of his visit. That gentleman sent him no invitation to enter, but came out upon the veranda with a scornful air and asked:

"Well, sir—what do you want with me?"

"I wish to see all your family, sir," said Gustave boldly. "I have a message, at least, which concerns them all."

"I can deliver any message which concerns them, young upstart. What have you to say?"

"Where is your lady, sir? I care not for the rest, but she will be glad to hear what I have to tell her."

"Is it news from my dear son?" asked the lady, for she had followed her husband and heard the last remark.

"Yes, madame. Your son requested me to say that he would be married to my sister this evening at the set of sun. And he asked particularly that you would come and bless his union."

"Bless it? Ha—ha! Rather will she do as I do. Curse him and the union!"

"No—no, my husband. I cannot curse him, even if you do," said the pale, sad lady. "If he loves Miss Minier, and she returns his affection, I do not see why that love should be thwarted or their union be prevented. You have cast him off, driven him from his home—you need not curse him more."

"Madame, I know that it is a difficult thing for a woman to hold her tongue, but you will favor me by doing it now. Your interference is not required," said Mr. Rolfe in a harsh and angry tone.

Another party now made its appearance. It was composed of Irene and Francis, the latter looking interestingly pale except about the eyes.

"What is that fellow doing here, father?" asked the son in an angry tone.

"Fratricide, that would be!" said Gustave, angrily. "You would soon be testing the beauties of justice were it not for the kindness of your brother. My message has been delivered, and I have no more to say. Before another day's sun is set, I and all of mine will be beyond the reach of your hated voice, at least."

"Is—Eugene, my son, going away?" asked Mrs. Rolfe.

"Yes, lady—far from here. We go on the morrow."

"Not beyond my reach!" muttered Francis, in a tone so low that it was only heard by his sister.

Gustave now departed, and Mr. Rolfe informed his children of the import of the message which he had received. After hearing it, they walked forth on the lawn, where they could converse without being heard by others.

"What do you think of this, Irene?" asked the brother, with a lowering brow.

"Only that what you have to do, must be done quickly!" was her ready reply.

"How can I prevent his marrying her?"

"You need not prevent it!"

"What! Do you counsel that I should tamely yield her to him?"

"No, my brother—not at all. Let him marry her and then let him learn that marriage is not possession."

"How? Take her from him after marriage? Is that your idea?"

"It is. Let them wed and within an hour after tear her from his side and bear her I care not where. To the sea if you like. You can get men to do this can you not?"

"I think so. There is a fellow down the river, who lives I think by smuggling. Money will induce him to do almost anything."

"You mean the man that they call Red Ralph the Rover?"

"I do. He has the name of being a bad man and there is always a gang of men about his place whose characters are quite as questionable as his own. I suppose they can be used."

"Most likely—but all must be well disguised. If I were you, I would ride down and see him, brother."

"I will, Irene, I cannot sleep until I am revenged for the insults which rankle in my bosom."

The two plotters now returned to the house.

CHAPTER V.

RED RALPH AND HIS DAUGHTER.

ABOUT seven or eight miles below Mr. Rolfe's plantation, dwelt Red Ralph—at least he staid there a portion of his time in a huge log-house with only two rooms in it, which he dignified by the name of tavern. His accommodations for man and beast were rather limited, if one article should be excepted—rum, for of that he had a large quantity, right from Jamaica. Whether it had been passed by the Revenue officers or not we are unable to say.

His face was almost as red as that of an Indian, his hair a shade darker than vermilion and even his gray eyes were bloodshot, looking out from under red eyebrows also. This peculiarity of color gained him the name of Red Ralph although his real name was Ralph Rafferty. Little was known of his history previous to his coming there but it was said when he had "a full" of liquor in him he would throw out dark hints of having been engaged in something other than a lawful calling. He owned a fine fast sailing schooner, in which he occasionally made long trips, with a larger crew than most other vessels carried.

It is noon of the day on which Gustave Minier delivered the message to Mr. Rolfe. Red Ralph is seated on a rude bench in front of his house with six or eight persons all looking as bad and desperate as himself. By their garb it would be hard to tell their occupation, although a part of the dress indicated them to be seamen. A huge jug of rum was in front of the landlord with which he filled the large awkward drinking cups of the party whenever they called for it.

But though Red Ralph looked stout, his red-headed wife and two red-headed and freckled daughters that slouched about the house didn't. They were as lean as a marine on short commons, and as limpy and about as clean as a dish-rag just out of service.

"Here's to the next voyage of the Fly-by-night and heavy profits," cried Red Ralph, as he tossed off a cup of rum.

"When will you sail, old man?" asked one of the party.

"Before long—when the first nor'wester makes up and comes snortin' on! I like a full breeze and a flowing sheet. Short voyages make the heaviest returns."

"That was a short one we made last January, eh, Captain Ralph—when we borrowed that cargo of rum from them infernal Dutchmen. I wonder if they'll ever come back to ask us to return it?"

"If you don't keep a close tongue in your head, Splattering Joe, I'll send you where they went to!" growled Ralph, looking around to see if any but his own gang was in hearing, and scowling angrily at the speaker. "One of these days you'll blot something that will cost you your neck! Hallo, I wonder who is coming yonder; he rides faster than traveling folks are apt to do. Go in the house, some of you, and scatter off till I see what he's after, and who he is!"

These last directions were given by Ralph in consequence of seeing a stranger riding rapidly from up the river toward his house. In a few moments he approached so near that Ralph recognized him.

"Umph!" he muttered. "It's that proud fool, Frank Rolfe. He thinks that nobody that isn't

born with a silver spoon in his mouth is worth shucks! I wonder what he's stavin' after, now—no good, I'll warrant."

In a few moments Francis Rolfe had reached the building, and contrary to his usual custom, (for he generally rode by without deigning to cast a look toward Ralph and his associates,) he reined in his horse and dismounted. Fastening his horse to a post, he approached Ralph, who had not risen from his bench, and with a very gracious smile, or a look that was intended for one, said:

"Good-day to you, Captain Ralph—this is fine weather, sir!"

"Yes, for them that likes it," growled Ralph. "For my part, I'd rather see it blow great guns, rain marling-spikes, and thunder loud enough to shake the air, with the lightning flashin' and whizzin' through the air like snakes of fire in a battle."

"Have you any good liquor, Captain Ralph?"

"Not such as quality folks like—but my rum is good enough for the likes of me and my customers."

"I expect it is very good—I'll try some of it. I was thrown from my horse, and got my face quite disfigured."

"Yes, I see your figure-head has been battered some!" said Ralph rather relaxing in his roughness, as he poured out a cup of rum.

Rolfe tossed this off with an effort to conceal his dislike of its taste and fiery strength, and then said: "I came down to see you on business, very particular business, and I wish to see you alone."

"Business, eh? Well, I'm on hand when there's anything to be made," said Ralph, deliberately taking out his flint and steel and lighting an old-fashioned Dutch pipe, which he had very likely borrowed just as he had the rum that Joe had spoken of, a short time before.

After he had done this, he arose and said:

"We'll go down alongside the river, Mr. Rolfe—I reckon there'll be no one to hear us there."

They walked on some ways in silence, until a quiet and lonely spot was found, and there Rolfe stopped and said:

"I s'pose we're out of ear-shot of everybody now—I can hear what business a gentleman like you have with Red Ralph, for they're few that ever deal with him."

"If you are well paid for it, can you do a smart job and keep a secret?"

"I can keep a secret as well as a dead man, but before I undertake a job of any sort I must know what it is. I'm not over-scrupulous in my deeds, but it takes a considerable pile to make me risk my wizen."

"There's but little risk in what I want you to do, if it is managed right," said Francis. "The truth is that my brother intends to be married to-night to the daughter of old Minier."

"Well, I suppose that touches your pride!" said Ralph with a half perceptible sneer. "You would like to have the thing prevented I suppose?"

"No—curse him, he may marry her, but within one hour from that moment which makes her his wife, I want her torn from his arms. You can get some men, disguise yourselves as Indians, and carry her off!"

"I suppose you'd like us to scalp her after we'd knocked her on the head, wouldn't you?"

"No—not by any means, that would not consummate my intention. I have a snug place to which I wish her carried. I'll take care of her after she is secured there."

"You must love that brother of yours!" said Ralph with another faint sneer.

"Love him? I hate him with an intensity which no words can describe. But yesterday he struck me—"

"Eh? Was that the stump against which your horse threw you? Excuse me, sir, if I laugh, but I didn't know that gentlefolks *could* lie as well as we roughs. If he hits so hard when he strikes a brother, he might handle a stranger a little more roughly. What did you intend to offer me if I undertook the job?"

"A hundred guineas in gold down—the moment you say you'll do it—another hundred when you have succeeded and she is in my power. The matter can be done quickly—the Indians will be blamed for it and no one will suspect either you or me!"

"If you and your brother have had words about the girl, he'd suspect you the first one, and if he's got the spunk that I think he has, he'll try hard to find her and dig your grave—but that's no'ing to me. If I run my risk, I've nothing to do with yours."

"Well, then, if I understand you, you agree to take the job, eh?"

"I didn't say I would. It rather goes against my grain—old Minier did me a small favor once, and it's not natural for me to forget good or evil deeds to war' me or mine. But then two hundred guineas isn't to be had every day!" muttered Ralph, apparently as if in a deep study, but his keen eyes were peering out from beneath his red brow with an expression of cunning which ought to have put Rolfe upon his guard. But he was too intent upon his object to notice this look.

"Here," said he, "is the first hundred guineas; say the word and they are yours. I'll procure the disguises and weapons for you. Will you take them?"

"I suppose I must," said the man, his eyes brightening as he looked upon the bag of gold. "You're sure there is one hundred good guineas there?"

"You can count them—I know they're right."

Slowly, one by one he counted them and as he replaced them in the bag and put it in his pocket—he said:

"Yes, I'll see you through. What time are they to be married?"

"At sunset. You've no time to lose—I'll hasten home to make my arrangements and then return with your disguises and give you further directions. I'll not be long gone—farewell."

"Won't you try some more of my Jamaica, before you go, sir—just to wash down the bargain?"

"No—I've no time to spare now!" said Rolfe shuddering at the remembrance of the fiery draught he had taken.

The young man now hastened back to his horse and rode off. Red Ralph was just about to follow him, when a rustle in some bushes near caused him to turn back. As he did so, he saw a red head rise to his view, and then the thin lank form of Susan, his eldest daughter, made her appearance.

"What the deuce are you sneaking there for, you red brat?" he shouted.

"I wasn't a-sneakin' round to hear nothin', father, but since I have heard somethin' I'm glad of it. I reckon you'll buy me a gown now, if I hold my tongue, won't you?"

"If you blab it I'll buy you a winding-sheet, you lazy minx!" said the father angrily.

"What was that small favor that old Minier did for you, father?" asked the girl.

"He only saved my life, and that gal of his nursed me as if I had been an angel instead of swearing Red Ralph—mean old cuss that I am!" replied the man warmly.

"That was the time when you first came here to settle, wasn't it, father?" continued the girl.

"Ay; when I was capsized in a squall, and soaked e'en a'most the life out of me."

"And now, father, you are a-goin' to return evil for good, eh? If you do, I'll never call you father ag'in—that's all about it; and I'll tell, if it costs my life."

"But then two hundred guineas, gal—that's a snag o' money to be made in a little bit of time."

"It'll take a longer time than they took who saved your life, and make them sorry they ever did a good act for so base a return."

"You're right, gal," said Ralph, huskily. "I'll go after Frank Rolfe and give him back his gold, and tell him I'll have naught to do with it."

"No—I wouldn't do that either—I'd keep his gold and fool him besides!" replied the girl, her gray eyes flashing with an expression of anger.

"How can I do it?" asked the old man, anxious to retain his hold upon the gold.

"I'll consider a plan and let you know in half an hour. I know it can be done, for I've got wit enough to match Frank Rolfe," replied the girl.

"Ay, the old Satan himself—and the spunk to carry it out! You're a chip of the old block, gal, as sure as I'm Red Ralph. But bear a hand with that plan of yours—whatever is done has got to be done quickly."

"I'll not be long; and now you go up to the house and keep your own counsel. Go to work and get your men all ready to do the job, as if you were really going to do it—he'll be back soon, and we must be ready for him."

So saying the girl turned off in an opposite direction, and Ralph returned to the house to indulge in another swig of rum, for his lips were seldom so long absent from its brim.

Some time before dark, Frank Rolfe returned to the "tavern" of Red Ralph. He was accompanied by his favorite negro with a large bag containing the necessary disguises. The negro had a felt cap so drawn over his forehead that the mark upon his black brow which had been made by Eugene, could not be seen. Leaving the bag in the house under the care of the negro, Rolfe walked down to the river-side with Ralph to arrange the final programme of action.

"Have you selected your men?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Ralph.

"How many?" asked the other.

"Six besides myself, and I'm as good as half a dozen!"

"Can they all be depended on?"

"Red Ralph is not such a fool as to have those around him that can't be depended on!" was the reply.

"Then we have nothing more to do until the time comes for us to act!"

"Yes we have. Are you goin' to be there to help us to run the gal off?"

"No—that wouldn't do. I must be at home and have neighbors there to prove it. I've asked half a dozen friends there on purpose to spend the evening."

"Well, that's all right so far as it goes—but where am I to leave the gal?"

"In a cabin that I have got ready for her. Tony, my black boy, who'll go with you, will show you, and when you get the girl there, you can leave her under his charge. The gold is hid in the cabin and he knows where to get it."

"He! Why you don't trust a nigger that way, do you?"

"Yes—I can trust him with anything—he fears me and hates my brother. But I have no more time to spare! I must be at the wedding to see how it goes off!"

"You take things as cool as a man-o'-war's man on full allowance!" said Ralph, appearing to look with admiration on the villainy of the other.

Rolfe made no reply to the flattery, but remarked: "I depend on you now—let the time be as soon after dark as possible," and rode off.

"I rather think it'll not be much darker than daylight to-night, except it should cloud up. The moon will be well up high. I hate moonlight—it may suit

for lovers, but it is death to them as wants darkness to cover their work. Hallo, the gal's back a'ready."

The last remark was made by the reappearance of the daughter spoken of before, who came up at a full gallop, mounted on a lean, shaggy-looking, but active pony, whose steaming flanks betokened the speed with which she had ridden.

"Well, gal, how goes it?" asked the father, as she sprang off the pony, and seizing the half-drained mug of rum from his hands, drank it as coolly as if she was used to the beverage.

"All right!" said she. "I'll tell you by and by when things are ready. It takes me to do a thing when I set my mind on it."

"So with most wimmen-folks. Them that can't win one way, will another. If they can't storm in their way, they'll do it by sniveling."

"You never knowed me to snivel much, father," said the girl.

"No—I'll be blowed sky-high, if I did. There's too much of Red Ralph in you."

"Who did you see while you was gone, eh, gal?"

"If I told you you'd know as much as me about it."

"In course I should, and that's what I want to know."

"Well, I saw them that will be thankful to you for a good act, and who couldn't have been mastered very easy, for they've got their eyes open to every danger. But come inside; now that I've got my breath, I'll spin out the whole story and show you how the things are to be fixed to-night."

CHAPTER VI.

BAFFLING A VILLAIN.

THE sun was low in the west: its deep crimson and golden light tinging sky and earth, tree and flower, and river with gorgeous light.

And calm should be the eve and bright the scene, for it was to be the bridal eve of Mignonette and Eugene. Already had the minister and a few neighbors and friends arrived.

"But one thing is wanting now," said Eugene as he glanced down toward the river, where the boats were moored in which they intended to depart. "The presence of my dear mother would add a joy to my heart!"

"There is a party coming up the river in a boat," said Mignonette, "a lady is with them—yes, two of them. It may be that your father and brother have altered their feelings toward you and are sorry for their injustice."

"If so, such sorrow comes too late. But I hope my mother is there!" said Eugene. "She is—my dear mother will bless our union," added he, as the near approach of the boat enabled him to see who were its occupants.

In a few moments the party landed and advanced to the house. It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Rolfe and Irene and Francis. Mr. Rolfe looked stern and gloomy, his lady looked kind, but very sad and tearful, while on the faces of their two children an air of mock cheerfulness reigned.

Mr. Minier, with that courtesy so peculiar to the French nation, advanced to welcome the party, while Eugene hastened to embrace his mother. This done, he bowed respectfully to his father, but took no notice whatever of his brother and sister.

All was now ready, and at the request of Eugene the ceremony was performed which made the twain one. Each of them breathed the response in a firm tone, solemnly as such vows should be breathed by those who mean to keep them.

A plain repast was served after it was over, but the Rolfes did not remain to join in it. The mother of Eugene embraced and blessed his bride ere she turned tearfully away. The father simply bowed as he left, after exchanging a farewell word with Mr. Minier, but Francis could not restrain his wish to wound his brother's feelings, so with a sneering voice he said:

"I wish you joy, my dear brother, at your acquisition—be careful to keep your bride from all harm."

"I will soon place her beyond your dark machinations!" said Eugene, bitterly.

Then, as if fearing that his passion would get the better of him, he turned to his bride, and paid no attention to the other. He only smiled as Francis muttered:

"We'll see—we'll see!"

After the guests had departed, but not before the good and venerable minister who had wedded the lovers, had asked Heaven's blessings upon them all, the Miniers and Eugene began to make preparations for their departure. The moon had risen high in the sky, and was pouring a flood of golden light over everything beneath it.

Mr. Minier had disposed of everything that he could not remove, during the day, and now only those things needed for their comfort in travel, and with which to begin a new home in the wilderness, were left; and these were to be removed to the boats which were to bear them to that new home wherever it might be found. Had not the kind pencil of hope painted a bright future for Mignonette, she would have sadly turned away from the roses she had planted, from the honeysuckles which she had trained. Had not the warm light of love filled the heart and brightened the pathway of Eugene, he would have felt sad in leaving the vicinity of his beloved mother, for he felt no kindred with the rest of his blood. Had it been the place of their birth; had friends of youth and maturity, or loving neighbors been clustered around them, the elder Miniers would have been loth to leave a spot where they had passed many pleasant days. But they had nothing to bid them stay. And when and where they went, there was Gustave with bold, free

light heart, bound to go, for they were all his people world.

Two hours had elapsed since the last guest had departed—over two hours since Francis Rolfe had sneeringly turned away with a bitter threat upon his lips. The only three house servants of Mr. Minier, faithful negroes, had been busy under the direction of Gustave, in carrying to and packing in the boats such things as were necessary for their journey.

"Is it not time that they came for their reward?" asked Mr. Minier of Eugene.

"Full time, I should think!" replied Eugene.

"Had they intended to fulfill the wishes of my brother they would have been here long ago. Ah, there they come."

As he uttered the last remark, two canoes filled with persons dressed in the uncouth war-dresses of the Indians, were seen paddling rapidly toward the landing. This they soon reached, and springing to the shore, uttered their shrill whoops and yells so fiercely, that Mignonette drew shuddering up to the side of her newly-wedded husband, and whispered:

"Are not these *real* Indians, my Eugene; may we not be in some danger?"

"Fear not my love," was his calm reply. "I wished them to carry out the original design as far as they could without injury to you, for I wish to punish my brother in the bitterest manner. Without doubt he has witnessed the departure of these men, perhaps even now is listening to their shouts or has some spy within hearing. Be calm, and rest assured that all will go well."

By this time the approaching band had surrounded the party, and then the leader approached, and doffing his plumed head-dress, he remarked:

"Ar'n't we purty tolerable specimens of Ingines, master Eugene?"

"First rate, friend Ralph!" replied Eugene—"but look to that fellow who is leaving; it is Tony, is it not?"

"Ay—trip up that blasted nigger some of you, and tie him neck and heels hog-fashion."

It was done in a moment, and Tony, who had attempted to escape as soon as he saw how things were, suddenly found himself a prisoner.

"Gal, have you got the dunnage to put on the nigger?" again asked Ralph.

"Yes, father—let some of your men fit it on him!" said the daughter, who was disguised like the rest, at the same time tossing a suit of her mother's old worn out clothes on the ground.

The men dragged the negro to an out-house, and soon rigged him up in the old woman's clothes and then brought him forth.

"Now, Ralph," said Eugene, "after we have settled, I wish you to carry Tony gagged to the hut where my brother wished you to carry my wife, and leave him there."

"Long life to your honor and all happiness to the lady!" shouted Red Ralph and his men, as they drank off a bumper of the generous liquor which he offered them.

"And now, Captain Ralph," said the elder Minier, approaching, "I will perform my part of the bargain made with your daughter. I told her if you refrained from attempting the fulfillment of that villain's wishes I would give you a hundred guineas. Faithfully has your part been performed—here is the gold."

"Mr. Minier!" said Ralph, huskily, "Red Ralph is a hard old cuss, but he isn't quite onhuman yet. He hain't forgotten how you risked your life to save his'n, nor how that purty angel there nussed him as tender as if he was a baby instead of a devil-may-care old ranger! Keep your gold, sir, for a stormy day, and if ever Red Ralph can do you a kind turn he'll do it, if it costs him an eye. After all, my daughter here has been the boss in this business, and I think she's rigged the matter up first rate."

"Let her wear this to remember me!" said Mignonette, unclasping from her neck a necklace of pure pearls, and extending it toward the disguised girl.

"No, lady, no—it is too pretty for a coarse being like me!" said the girl. "I've only done my duty."

"Nay, keep it for my sake—look upon it when I am far away and think that it is from one who will ever think gratefully of you!"

"I'll take it, lady, but, indeed it is too pretty to wear—but I'll keep it as long as I live!" replied the girl, placing it in her bosom.

"If your honor will be so good as to give Red Ralph an idea of the course you mean to steer, he'll keep a sort of lookout in your wake and see that no harm follows arter you!" said that worthy to Minier.

"He is right—my brother is revengeful and might follow us," said Eugene.

"We shall enter the Chesapeake and go up the river Susquehanna—how far we know not, but far enough to find some lovely spot where we can build us a home secure from disturbance and alarm."

"I wish we were going along, father!" said Ralph's daughter.

"Tisn't likely the gentlefolks would like to have such rough neighbors as we are, gal!"

"Rough bosoms often inclose warm hearts," said Mr. Minier kindly; "we shall never object to neighbors who are either poorer or rougher than we are, if they are only good."

"If danger should follow in your wake and I smell it, you'll see me, sir!" said Ralph. Then turning to his men he added:

"Tote that nigger to the boat and then we'll be off."

"Did my brother direct you to give any signal after you succeeded?" asked Eugene.

"Yes, sir, we were to give a yell or two in front of the mansion as we passed."

"He told you not to harm any of the rest of us, didn't he?"

"No, sir—he bade me be sure to knock Master Gustave on the head; and—"

"I'm much obliged to him for his intentions," said Gustave. "I'd like to have him out on this green sward for just five minutes at this time."

"And he said"—continued Ralph, "that I might keep you a prisoner for a week and then let you go. As to the old folks, he said he didn't care what became of them!"

"The dastardly wretch!" muttered Eugene. Then addressing Ralph, and handing him a letter he said:

"Fasten this letter to the negro's clothes, so that my brother will find it when he goes to look for his prize."

"That will I do, Master Eugene—and now good-night all, and a safe voyage to you; we may meet again."

The party were soon off, and before the sound of their paddles had died away the preparations of the Miniers for embarkation were completed. And just as they were stepping into their boats, three in number, occupied by the servants and family, they heard the shrill yells which had been the signal desired by Francis Rolfe.

CHAPTER VII.

"HERE'S TO THE WINNER!"

As he had stated to Ralph, fearful of the suspicion which might attach to him in connection with the abduction, Francis had invited several of his boon companions, young men from other plantations, to spend the evening with him. As usual, cards and liquor were their sources of amusement, and while they poured the one down, they handled the others as those who are used to them.

The young men noticed that something was out of the way with Rolfe, for he drank deeply and played carelessly, but when spoken to about it he declared that nothing was the matter with him, and as he was a Virginian gentleman of course they were bound to believe him. But often would he start from his seat and listen intently as if for an expected sound, and then sinking back in his chair would empty his glass and proceed with his play.

At last the wished-for signal came and with a scarce suppressed expression of joy, Francis rose from his seat and went to the window to look out.

"I wonder who can be hooting and yelling so tonight?" asked one of his companions.

"Probably some drunken Indians coming up from below," said Rolfe with studied carelessness.

"They are always prowling around here. I wouldn't wonder if they did some damage yet," he continued, "we are too careless in regard to them. They have many fancied wrongs to redress, and think that we have driven them from their hunting-grounds, but let us to our cards again. First, fill up—I have a toast to give."

They all filled their glasses and awaited his words. His eye flashed and his face flushed as he said:

"In the game of life, as in that of cards, here's to the winner!"

"To the winner! Ha! ha! ha!" shouted a voice at the door, which sounded strangely like that of his brother.

Dropping his untasted glass to the floor, on which it shivered to atoms, Francis rushed to the door, which was ajar, and dashed it wide open. Not a person could be seen.

"Gentlemen, did you hear a voice?" he asked, as he returned with a pallid face.

"We did; but it sounded like the echo of your own!" said one of the party.

"Perhaps it was," said Francis, with a tremulous voice, as he filled another glass and drank it off, without naming the toast again. He now scarcely concealed his impatience for the company to leave, and it was not long before they gratified his wish, all wondering at the singularity of his demeanor.

Hardly had the last guest mounted his horse and rode away, when, wrapping a cloak around him, Francis hastened from the house. His course was toward a dense and almost impenetrable wood, east of the mansion, lying at least a half-mile from it, and extending to the bank of the river. This he entered; although the thick branches overhead almost prevented the moonlight from reaching the narrow and tortuous path which he trod, he moved on rapidly as if he was used to the way. Into this wood he penetrated some four or five hundred yards, when he came out into a small clearing, containing perhaps a half-acre of greensward on which grew neither bush or shrub. In the center of this, the moon's clear light fell upon a small hut or cabin, such as was generally built for the use of the negroes on the plantation—having no windows and but a single door.

"Tony!" he cried, as he entered the edge of this clearing.

He heard no sound in reply—only the rippling of the not far distant river, and the sighing of the wind through the trees fell upon his listening ear.

"Curse the black scoundrel! what can have become of him?" he muttered, as he strode across the green plat to the door of the cabin.

His eye brightened as he opened the door and saw a female's dress and the outlines of a figure at its further side.

"They've got her at any rate!" he cried.

He turned sharply around at sound of a footstep behind him, and confronted his sister, who, enveloped in a cloak, and closely hooded, had followed him.

"Forgive me, brother—I am not here to thwart you in anything—I knew you were coming, and thought I would be present to see how the proud minx bore her capture. Bring her out, brother, so that I can see how the bride looks by moonlight;

naughty thing to leave her husband alone on his wedding night!" cried Irene.

Francis entered the hut to do so.

"She is cursed heavy," he muttered, as he attempted to lift up his prize.

"Never mind—drag her out, dear brother. She's used to rough exercise."

With the greatest difficulty Francis dragged his prize out into the open air.

"Confound it!" he cried, fiercely, "we are betrayed and fooled—it is Tony!"

"Ha! ha! ha! Here's to the winner!" shouted a voice in the woods, in the direction of the river.

"Ten thousand curses! I'm foiled after all," almost howled the brother, as he cut the thongs which bound the negro and removed his gag.

"How came this?—speak, you black wretch, before I cut your infernal throat."

At first the fellow could not articulate a word, so long had his jaws been distended by the immense gag which Ralph had so skillfully placed there. He only pointed to the letter which was pinned to his dress.

Francis hastily snatched this up and read. It ran thus:

"KIND, VERY KIND BROTHER:—I am capable of taking care of my own bride, and I hope you will give yourself no further trouble upon her account or my own, for we are beyond your power and scorn your hate. EUGENE."

"Beyond my power? No, not if I know myself, you are not," yelled Francis, his face turning livid with passion.

"Beyond my power!—no, by the Hand which made me, I'll follow you to the very gates of hell!"

"Better go toward heaven—that's the road they've taken," shouted a voice in the woods.

"Who's there? Spies and traitors on every hand. Who's there—speak, or I'll fire," shouted Francis, half in terror, half in anger, as he drew a pistol from his bosom.

"Dat's Red Ralph, Massa Frank—you'd better leff him be or you get bucked wuss dan dis nigger. He's got forty-leben pistols and a belt chock full ob knives, and dere's more like him."

"Has he played the traitor? Robbed me of my gold and my revenge?"

"He's a most killed dis nigger o' yours, Massa Frank. Him and his men tossed me about like a bag o' 'taters—butt my head ag'in' de trees and like to knock some ob 'em down."

"Curse him, I'll make him answer for this. He'll find that two can play at a game of this kind."

"Here's to the winner! Ha! ha! ha!" cried the same voice in the woods.

"The devil! I'll not bear this—Tony, into the woods and hunt that fellow up!" shouted Francis, raising his pistol in the direction from which the sound came, but forbearing to fire.

"Ki, Massa Frank, dis nigger 'd radder not. How can I trabble in dese wimmin-folks' clothes?"

"Go to your cabin, then, and change your rig—say nothing about this, but come to me early in the morning. Come, sister Irene, let us return to the house. I must study out some new plan of vengeance, for I'll never rest until I have it. To think that that villain, Ralph, should deceive me—that, too, when I paid him so liberally. But I'll have the worth of it out of him. I know he defrauds the king—he's a smuggler, if he's not a pirate. I'll set a trap for him. Come, sister, come—let us go home. To-morrow I'll take further steps to carry out my wishes."

"You was a fool, brother, to trust to the leadership of that Ralph. Had you led the affair yourself all would have gone well," replied his sister.

"Not if I had been foiled and detected, for then I would have been ruined. Had Ralph done as he promised, she would now have been in my power, and I could have proved that at the hour of her abduction I was enjoying myself with my friends. Many a leader in crime has been shielded by less palpable evidence than that would have been. But we have been foiled—all we have to do is to renew the trial and be sure next time. It is useless to regret this failure."

They now returned toward the mansion, Tony leading the way, moving awkwardly enough in the strange garments in which he had been dressed.

They had scarcely got out of hearing when Red Ralph, accompanied by his daughter and still in disguise, emerged from the woods and came out in the clearing.

"So, so! he'll set a trap for me, will he?" said the old man in a musing way. "He'll find me like one o' Mother Cary's chickens—ever on the wing, and wide awake. He'll have to grow a heap older and wiser than he is now. But wasn't it rich to see him pull the nigger out into the moonlight—eh, gal?"

"It was worth a deal," replied the girl. "I wish Mr. Eugene had been here to see it; it would have done him so much good! Didn't I imitate his voice well when I said, *here's to the winner*?"

"First rate, gal. I could have sworn 'twas him that spoke. By the way, we can plague him that way again some time. We must watch him close and see what devilry he's up to next."

"That I'll do, for the sweet lady's sake. Didn't she look like an angel, father?"

"As I've never seen any of 'em, I aren't prepared to say; but she's handsomer than e'er a picture that I've seen. But let's get down to the boat, gal; it's getting to be late, and I think we've had fun enough for one night."

"Where do you think they are now, father?" asked the girl, alluding to the travelers.

"A long ways down the river, gal, or perhaps camped before this; for the old gentleman told me

he shouldn't run all night. We've got to go up to their old place in the morning; he left some nice things for me and your mother, that he said we must go after."

"You're glad you took my advice, ain't you, father?"

"I can't say but what I am glad, gall! We've made money, and haven't done anything worse than cheating a rogue, after all."

The two now took their way to their boat.

It was midnight when the three boats of Mr. Minier with their precious living cargoes, reached a lovely island, where it was proposed they should encamp for the first time, and from whence in the morning they could resume their voyage in a regular manner.

The island did not contain over four or five acres of land, and was thinly wooded with fine lofty trees, with but little underbrush. A nice sward of green grass extended beyond the smooth, pebbly beach upon which they landed. A sweeter place for an encampment never greeted the eye of a practiced voyager. Upon landing, Mr. Minier, who had been an old soldier in *La Belle France*, announced that, as commander, he should now give directions for camping, such as, for their future comfort and security against danger, they should always follow.

"It is well, even here where there is probably no danger, to commence," said he; "for then we will get used to the routine of duty by the time that it becomes actually necessary."

Three tents had been provided and these were now pitched. One for Mr. Minier, his wife and Gustave was pitched in the center—next, on the left, for Eugene and his bride—that on the right was to be occupied by the servants.

While the tents were going up, one of the servants built a camp-fire, hung their coffee kettle over it—put some meat to broil, and had some fine fish in the pan. In less than half an hour as good a meal was served up in that center tent as any traveler could wish for. In truth, Mrs. Minier said that it tasted better than any she had eaten for a long time—that the traveling appetite had already come upon her.

"I suppose you'll set a sentry to-night, father?" said Gustave.

"Yes, my boy, for we're in the field now. I make you guard for the rest of the night; Eugene's faithful dog will keep you company."

"I'll enter on my duty with pleasure, father," said the young man, gayly.

Their supper finished, with the blessing of their parents the newly wedded pair retired to their tent and soon all was still in that moonlit camp, except the sound of Gustave's footsteps as he paced to and fro upon the beach before the tents.

It was sunrise before Gustave aroused the party. "This will never do, sir sentinel!" said his father, when his son awakened him. We should have broken up the camp before this hour. A good soldier never sleeps after the dawn of day."

"Pardon, dear father, I thought that as it was late when we encamped, you might wish to rest this morning."

"Thought, my boy? Thought has nothing to do with discipline. A good soldier never thinks, his superiors think for him. Hereafter, remember that we rise at reveille, in other words at daybreak. I'd beat reveilles, but we have not got a drum."

It is scarcely necessary to detail the proceedings of the morning. Breakfast was got, dispatched, the tents struck and packed in the boats, and before the sun was an hour high, the party were sailing down the river before a light but pleasant breeze. And thus for a time we will leave them.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FRIGHTENED NEGRO.

THAT WAS a sleepless night to Francis Rolfe. He did not close his eyes even to dream of vengeance, but lay awake, his soul full of bitter thoughts and maddening reflections. At the very hour when our travelers entered their boats from their first encampment, he was up and at the cabin of his negro.

"Tony!" he shouted, "up, you black scoundrel—I want you."

"Well, Massa Frank, here I is—what's wantin' now?" said the negro, grinning so as to show a double row of ivory as sharp and white as the teeth of a tiger.

"I want you to take a boat and cross the river, then sneak up under the cover of the woods to see what is going on at the Minier place?" said Rolfe.

"Ki, Massa Frank, if dat's de word I s'pose dis nigger's got to go, but by my gum, I's a-gwine to keep clear of Massa Gene, now. Dis nigger's had the wuss of it two times, may be he'll lose his wool next time," replied the negro.

"You need not put yourself in danger!" said Rolfe, leading the way by a narrow by-path, down to the river.

They soon reached the bank where a canoe was moored. As the negro unfastened and stepped into this, the eyes of Frank Rolfe caught sight of a large skiff with three men in it which was pulling up the opposite side of the river close in under the land.

"Who can those be in yonder boat, Tony?" he asked.

The negro looked at the boat intently a few moments. Two of the men in it were rowing—the third was steering.

"Fore de Lord, Massa Frank, I beliebe it's Red Ralph."

"Curse him, what can he be doing up this way so early. He must be watched—see, he goes up the bayou toward Minier's!—push off, Tony—push off and get on his track."

"Massa Frank, you know dis nigger allers minds you—but, Massa Frank, I feels skeery ob dat man."

He'd as soon skin this nigger alive as he'd eat a 'tater."

"Coward! I'll go with you, if you're afraid. I'm well armed and feared him not," said Rolfe, springing into the canoe and seizing a paddle.

By this time the boat which Red Ralph was steering was out of sight in the narrow lagoon which led to the late residence of Mr. Minier. Pushing from the shore, Frank and the negro were soon darting rapidly across the stream, which, yellowed by the rich rays of the rising sun, looked almost like a flood of molten gold.

Instead of following the other boat, as soon as they had crossed, they drew their canoe up out of sight, into some bushes which grew by the water-side. Then, stealthily they moved on through the woods toward the Minier place, keeping close under cover of the trees and bushes, so as not to be seen.

On arriving within sight of the buildings, Rolfe halted, the negro keeping behind him, and observed that Red Ralph was removing several articles of furniture from the house.

"Can it be possible that they have gone already?" he muttered.

"I reckon dat's a fact, Massa Frank!" said the negro. "Lass night, deir boats was all full ob movin' things!"

"A curse light on them, if they have—but one thing is sure, they've not gone where I cannot follow. But I must see what that scoundrel Red Ralph is doing—he shall pay me back my money!" said Francis, roughly, as he strode forward toward the house.

"Ef he'd take dis nigger's advice, he'd keep clean of dat Red Ralph—ef he ain't a nigh relation to de debil, de ole gentleman hasn't got any!" said Tony as he slowly followed his master.

"What are you doing here, sir?" said Rolfe, as he met Red Ralph, coming out of the house, with an article of furniture in his hand.

"When I know what right you have to inquire, Mr. Frank Rolfe, then I'll think about telling you!" replied Ralph.

"Scoundrel, why did you deceive me last night?" asked Rolfe, his face reddening with anger.

"Look ye here, Frank Rolfe—if you don't want to get a worse face than your brother gave you the other day, just keep your jaw tackle belayed! Blast me for a fresh-water lubber if I haven't two-thirds of a mind to give you a dose of hickory sprouts, as it is."

"Villain—rob me, and then threaten me, eh? But I'll match you yet. I know what your habits are."

"Do you?" cried Ralph, laying down the article which he had in his hand. Do you think you fully understand all of them? This one for instance, and as he spoke, before Rolfe could comprehend his intentions, he raised his clinched hand, and with a quick heavy blow laid him sprawling on his back.

"There," said he—"take that and learn that one of my habits is to knock men down when they insult me."

"Curse you, you shall die," yelled Rolfe, as he arose and drew a pistol.

But before he could use it, Ralph's foot arose in the air and the pistol was kicked twenty feet from him.

"Tony—you black scoundrel, why don't you help me," shouted Rolfe.

"The nigger knows more than his master," said Ralph, pointing to the negro, who was moving off toward the woods. "And you better feller in his tracks, young man, afore I get mad, and do something that your father'll be sorry for—make him alter his will, seein' as he'd have no such scoundrel as you to leave it to."

"What—would you murder me?"

"Killin' a dog isn't murder in law, is it? Clear out afore I get mad, I tell you," cried Ralph, advancing toward Rolfe.

The latter seemed to think that a prudent retreat was preferable to an inglorious defeat, and now retired, muttering curses as he went.

"Where do you think the Miniers went?" he asked, as he overtook the negro.

"I hearn 'em say dat dey was a-gwine up the Susquehanna country, Massa Frank," replied the negro.

"They must be followed. Ten thousand curses on that red-faced scoundrel. I'll have his heart's blood yet. I know not who to trust here—I must carry out my plans of vengeance alone. Even you, Tony, are a cursed coward, and desert me when I'm attacked."

"No, Massa Frank—dis nigger isn't a coward, when he's only got a human man to tackle. But dat Red Ralph is the debil—I knows he is dat, and I am afraid ob him."

"I'll put him where you'll not have occasion to fear him," said Rolfe, bitterly.

"Ki, Massa Frank, ef you was to kill him, maybe he'd be wuss dead dan alive. I wouldn't meet his spook on a dark night, for all ob ole Massa's plantation!"

"Poh—his ghost wouldn't trouble you. But we must get ready for a voyage. I'll pursue that party till I have satisfaction, or I'll die. I will neither forgive nor forget!"

Having arrived at the river-side, Rolfe washed off the blood which had followed from the blow from Red Ralph, and then entering the canoe, they crossed the river.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW HOME—ONFONTA.

THREE weeks had gone by, and Mr. Minier and his party had passed a long way up the river without finding a spot which suited them for a home.

Each night they had encamped as they did on the first night which we described, and had so far met

with no disturbance. They had successively passed the mouth of the "Blue Juniata," the West Branch and the Chemung, and had got so far up the rapid stream that the increasing swiftness of the current, as well as the shallow bars, began to make the ascent laborious.

On the noon of the twenty-second day of their voyage they landed to take their mid-day meal, at a place which pleased them more than any which they had yet seen. Although no lofty mountains reared their craggy heads around, lovely hills, thickly wooded, were seen back of the level plains which extended for near a mile back on the northern side of the river. On its southern side, right up from the very bank, arose a range of hills which were covered with a heavy timber-growth. The land was rich and fertile. From a northerly course, a creek came rushing down to mingle its waters with the larger river. And up from the center of the plain, right upon the river's northern bank, arose one single hill round and lofty, standing like a watch-tower or some monument reared by people long since passed away.

The plains were covered with trees, and green grass grew thick and heavy beneath them. The tracks of deer and elk were thick down by the water-side.

"Here is the spot, at last! Do you not think so, my children?" said Mr. Minier, gazing with delight upon the lovely scene around him.

"I could be contented anywhere with those who are here, but this is indeed a lovely spot!" said Eugene. "What says Gustave?"

"That it looks like first-rate hunting-ground, and corn would grow without work, just to thank you for planting it!" replied that individual, who was busy in preparing an elk steak for broiling.

"And are you pleased, my Mignonette?"

"Dear Eugene, that which pleases you, delights me, you know."

"And my mother?"

"Is satisfied with what pleases the rest," replied Mrs. Minier.

"Then the vote is taken!" said her husband—"here we will pitch our tents, and here we will build our home, for as speedily as possible must we prepare a house not only for comfort, but for defense, if ever, unfortunately, the red-men should become hostile."

The tents were speedily pitched, close on the point of land formed at the confluence of the two streams—beneath the broad-spreading limbs of an immense tree.

After they had eaten, the two young men departed on a tour to examine the best timber for building purposes, and to mark that which could be most easily brought to the spot where they intended to build, for not having cattle or horses, they had to study convenience as much as possible.

It is not necessary for me to describe their labors for the next ten or twelve days—let the result suffice. At the end of that time a neat log house with four apartments occupied a little knoll which was above the high-water mark as seen along the river banks. It was floored, ceiled and shingled with split slabs, the chimney was composed of stones, sticks and mud plaster, but for all that it was strong, warm and comfortable. It had a kind of projecting second story, and was pierced with holes, through which guns could be used against besiegers, for old soldier-like, Mr. Minier was determined to be ready in time of peace for war, if it should come.

They had also cleared away an acre or more of ground immediately about the house, which they would have planted had it not been too late in the season—for it was now harvest time.

While these operations were going on they were visited by several parties of Indians, who, though they strove to appear stoically indifferent, still exhibited much curiosity in regard to the movement. By giving a few presents to these, Mr. Minier strove to gain their good will, and apparently did, for they brought him in return corn, beans, pumpkins and wild fruits, which, with winter before them, were very acceptable. The hunting skill of Eugene and Gustave was brought into use in killing meats which were smoked and dried for winter use, and in a short time everything wore an appearance which betokened that plenty would reign with them for the winter, and as they had seed for planting in the coming spring, they had no fear beyond the first season.

Among the few who visited our new settlers none were worthy of very particular note except a sub-chief of the Delawares and his daughter, a young squaw of rare beauty and grace. Mahaca, the chief, had in some way quarreled with the members of his tribe, and had left them, preferring to hunt on the ground where the Oneidas, the Onondagas and the Susquehanna Indians ranged, for the two former tribes in those days frequently left their own grounds to hunt amid the mountains where bear and elk were the most plenty. He was a stern and gloomy man, ever silent and thoughtful, but a most skillful hunter and fisherman.

His wigwam he had reared on the river's brink, at the foot of the precipice which formed the southern side of the round hill before spoken of, and was carpeted and lined with soft furs from the beaver, the martin, the black and the silver-gray fox. Tasty work of beads and feathers could be seen on every hand, the manufacture of Oneonta's hands. Meats and dried fish enough to feed a small army were stored away in a dry cave at the back of the wigwam. From its location one might suppose that he had enemies whom he feared, for it was almost inaccessible except by water, for it was built on a small platform of rock which was *ni h-d* into the cliff which reared a perpendicular wall above and on either hand.

Frequently had Gustave and Eugene paused at the wigwam in their fishing excursions, and the former upon his return always descanted most enthusiastically upon the exceeding beauty of the Indian maiden. Some little presents sent to her by Mignonette brought the pretty girl in return with gifts of furs, beaded moccasins, and other articles. And Mahaca came with her, for as a miser watches his gold or a mother her babe, so was his keen eye ever with his daughter.

She was his only child, and warrior-hunter as he was, he worked about the wigwam, brought the wood for the fires and bore home the game which he slew, contrary to Indian custom, rather than see her perform the drudgery.

He had been among the whites considerably at Albany, and in the settlements at the head of the Delaware, and had learned to speak English tolerably well. So had Oneonta, and with the language had learned many of the customs of the pale-faces, although she strictly adhered to the original and beautiful dress of her nation.

It became her well—the coronet of snow-white feathers—the petticoat of fringed fawnskin, the beaded moccasins on her tiny feet, and over all, the brilliant mantle of feathers, of every hue that could be found on the beautiful forest birds. Never a queen wore her robe of ermine more proudly or more gracefully than did Oneonta wear her mantle.

But it is time we left our new settlers and their friends for a time, and returned to those whom we left in the East, and see how they get along.

CHAPTER X. AN EAVESDROPPER.

RED RALPH stood down by the river-side after the Miniers had departed, looking anxiously up the river, as if he was waiting for some one.

The hour was late—the moon had gone down, and only a few stars now and then came in sight amid the drifting clouds which overspread the sky.

"I wonder what keeps the gal so long?" he muttered. "If she don't come soon, I'll out boat and go arter her; and if harm has come to her, Frank Rolfe will rue it."

At that instant the quick splash of a paddle was heard up the river, and in a few moments more a canoe shot in to the landing-place, and a person dressed in man's clothes, leaped lightly to the shore.

"Is that you, Jennie? Is that you, gal?" asked Red Ralph, hurriedly.

"Yes, father; and I am as dry as a chip," replied the girl.

"Well, what news, gal?—is that devil-bird up to more mischief?" asked Ralph.

"As soon as I wet my whistle I'll tell you, father. I've not been twenty minutes in coming down."

"I reckon there was need for such haste, then, or a gal as lazy as you naturally are, wouldn't have used it."

"Need enough, you'll find out, when I tell you."

The girl, without waiting for his assistance, and with a strength which seemed almost herculean, dragged the canoe far up on the pebbly beach and then led the way up toward the house. The first thing which she did upon entering this, was to pour herself out a cup of Old Jamaica, which she drained at a single draught. No one was in the house except her mother and a sister, and upon her father again requesting her to narrate the result of her expedition, she did so without hesitation.

"I was so well disguised," she said, "that I'd no fear of being known either by Rolfe or the nigger, and none of the rest of the folks there ever saw me that I know of, so I rowed right up to the landing, and moored my canoe close in by some boats of theirs, intending to go right up to the house and, pretending to be a traveler on my way down the river, ask for a night's lodging, and then take my chances of learning what Frank's intentions were. But as luck would have it, just before I got to the house I saw some one come out of it. Though he was all bundled up in a cloak, I knew by his height and step that it was Frank Rolfe. So I drew back into the shade of a large tree and let him pass. As he went by me, I saw that he carried a gun, and I felt a little anxious to know what that was for, for I didn't think that it was likely that he would go hunting wild game in the night time."

"Not exactly," said Ralph as he quietly lighted his pipe—"but go on, gal."

"So after he'd gone by I stepped out and followed him, keeping as much in the shade of the trees as I could. He went toward the negro-quarters at first, but when he got nearly to them, he turned off to a cabin that stood by itself and pushed open the door. There on a bench before the fire sat the same nigger that we rigged up in mother's clothes, him with a cross cut on his forehead. He had a gun and a whole lot of other traps about him, looking as if he was bound on a hunt or a journey."

"Ay—mayhaps they are, but if Red Ralph don't shorten it, he's a cursed liar!" was the answer.

"Just keep still till I'm done reporting and you'll know more," said the girl. Then she continued her story:

"He shut the door when he went in and I crept up to it to listen and hear what was going on. The first thing he said was: 'Well, Tony, have you got things about ready for a start?' 'Yes, Massa Frank,' said the nigger—'all am right—de pervision's in de boat, and I've got hooks and lines and de blankets, and de powder and lead you gib me, and de beads, and paints, and calikers for de fool Injuns, and de rum too. I guess you can pass for a rich trader 'mong dem as easy as eatin' possum.' 'Then to-

night 'll be a good time to start,' said Frank Rolfe, 'we've nothin to delay us.'—'Ki, Massa Frank,' said the nigger, 'dis am a Friday night in de fuss place, an' de next difficulty am dat dare isn't no moon!'—'So much the better,' said his master, 'for we want no prying eyes upon us when we start. That cursed Red Ralph or some of his devilish crew might have an eye on us and try to interfere. It's a deep game that I'm playing now, and I must spare no caution in it.'

"I heard him that far, father, and I don't know why, for I couldn't help it, I sung out just as I did in the woods when you was with me, and in the tone of Eugene as far as I could imitate it—'Here's to the winner!'"

"I heard them spring to their feet, heard the click of their gun-locks, and heard Frank utter a curse of some kind—I thought that it was about leaving-time then, and springing into some bushes which were near, I started on a keen run for the river. The next thing that I heard was the whizz of a couple of bullets over my head and the report of their guns, but that didn't hurt me, and I kept on and here I am."

"Didn't they follow you?"

"I reckon they did, for I heard them at the boats after I had pushed off, but I came fast and I heard no more of them."

"Do you think that they believed you to be Eugene Rolfe?"

"It is hard to tell about that, I tried to speak like him!"

"I'd like to be sure about it. If they do start to go up the river after him, blast me if they sha'n't have company, and that too when they least expect it."

"If you go, father, I'm bound to go along."

"You shall, gal!"

"All right, pop. But I'm going to turn in. I'm tired as a sick soldier on an eight hours' guard."

CHAPTER XI.

A BROTHER SEEKING REVENGE.

WE will now return to Francis Rolfe and the negro and see what they did after the alarm of the girl Jennie.

When they heard the cry, "Here's to the winner," both rushed to the door, and as they saw the person who had uttered it bound off into the woods, they fired, but with such a hurried aim, that their shots were ineffectual. Without waiting to reload, they pursued the fugitive, but Jennie was very fleet of foot, and arrived at the landing some time before them. When they got there, they could hear the splash of the paddle far out on the night-enveloped river, but could not see the canoe.

"Do you think that was my brother?" asked Rolfe.

"Ki, no, Massa Frank. I'seart'n sure it was dat gal of Red Ralph. I knowed her voice. She's been playin' spy."

"By Jupiter, I believe you're right. Perhaps she overheard what I said!"

"Jis' as like as maybe, Massa Frank."

"Then, the sooner we're off the better, for if we start in the night we can go by his place without his discovering us."

"Dat's a fact, Massa Frank. I don't like dat debil-bird; he's deff on dis nigger."

"Well, go and get all things in the boat, boy. I'll go up to the house to see my sister and make an excuse for my absence, so that even if Red Ralph comes to ask about me, they'll throw him off the track—and then we'll start."

The negro started off to obey these orders, and Rolfe went up to the mansion.

About an hour later he returned to the boat, in which the negro sat waiting, for he had got everything ready for a start.

They at once shoved off, and the negro, taking up a pair of sculls, rowed the boat noiselessly along close in by the shore, keeping on the opposite side of the river from that on which the house of Red Ralph stood.

The day dawned just before they reached the island where the Minier family encamped on their first night out, and here Rolfe directed the negro to land, intending to have some breakfast cooked there.

"By Jove! they've been here! If we keep a good lookout, we can track them by their camping-places," cried Rolfe gleefully, as he noticed the signs of the camp.

"Maybe dey've gone a long way up in de Susquehanny country, Massa Frank," said the negro, as he proceeded to light a fire.

"I care not how far," replied Rolfe; "they can't escape me. Like a bloodhound I'll follow on their track until I reach them, and then they shall find that they've worse than a bloodhound to deal with!"

The negro soon had breakfast ready, and Rolfe hastily dispatched it, for he was eager to be on his way. Before the sun had fairly started on its day's journey they were again under motion, moving rapidly before a fine breeze which had set in.

At the same hour Red Ralph was going up the river as fast as he could row a light skiff, on his way to the mansion of Mr. Rolfe, to endeavor to learn whether Frank and the negro had started or not. His intention was to make some plausible excuse for the visit, and to ask for young Rolfe.

He was met after he had landed, and before he had reached the house, by Miss Irene, who probably had seen him coming and anticipated the nature of his visit.

"Good-morning, ma'm," said Ralph, as he respectfully raised his hat. "Can you tell me where I can find Mr. Francis Rolfe?"

"What do you want with him?" she asked, curling her pretty lips scornfully.

"That I can only tell to himself. My business with him is important!"

"It will have to remain unfinished for a time, then," answered Irene. "My brother has gone away."

"I expected about as much," said Ralph. "Can your ladyship tell me where he is gone?"

"I don't know," said the lady, with evident confusion. "Somewhere south, I believe."

"The Susquehanna don't lay south, ma'am," said Ralph, fixing his eyes upon her face, which now was alternately paling and blushing.

"What do you mean, sir?—you are impertinent," she retorted, angrily.

"I'd rather be impertinent than tell lies, ma'am."

"You graceless villain, leave this place instantly!"

"Look ye here, ma'am, you're a woman, and can say what you please; but I knocked your black-hearted cuss of a brother down for calling me out of my name. You know as well as I do, where your brother has gone, and what he has gone for."

"If I did, I wouldn't tell such a brute as you."

"You needn't trouble yourself, ma'am—I know where he has gone, and I shall see him before you. I will be on his track before twenty-four hours are passed, and I will foil him in his intended villainy just as sure as my name's Ralph."

"You had better be careful, he is well armed, and would shoot you down like a dog if he saw you following him."

"He'd soon learn that shooting was a game which two could play at. I don't fear him any more than I would any other dog, and if he desires ever to see his lovely and amiable sister again, he'll be careful how he offers to harm me."

"Scoundrel, I understand your sneer! But I deserve it for demeaning myself by standing here and conversing with you. If you do not instantly leave this place, I'll call to some of my father's negroes and have them lash you with their whips."

"Your father couldn't well afford to spare his niggers just now when they're getting in the 'baccy crops; but he'd have just as many dead niggers as offered to lay hands on me. But I'm losin' time—I must give chase to that sneaking vagabond brother of yours," replied Ralph, as he turned on his heel and walked toward his boat.

"Ten thousand maledictions upon his head!" muttered Irene as she turned toward the house. "He evidently knows all and will foil Francis if he can. I wish that I could warn him of his danger; but I cannot now. He must take his chances!"

When Red Ralph reached the landing in front of his house, his daughter Jennie stood there awaiting him.

"Well, father," she cried, "did you see him?"

"No, gal; but I saw young Jezebel, his sister. Him and the nigger has sure gone."

"Good! we'll have the fun of following him. I'll on with my boy rig, we'll take guns and fishing-tackle, and have rare sport."

"Haden't I better take a couple of the men along?" asked Ralph.

"No—if we two couldn't handle them I'd sell myself for a chaw of tobacco. Let the men stay to take care of mother and the house; we can do all that is to be done."

"Well, gal, I guess you're about two-thirds right. Get some baking done, and fix up for the cruise. Don't forget plenty of powder and lead."

"I won't, father; nor the rum either. Neither you nor me would be worth shucks without that."

"That's a livin' fact, gal. You're sensible to the last."

"When will you start, father?"

"The first thing in the morning. He mustn't get too much start, or it'll be long afore we overhau him."

"Not very; for I know he'll be too lazy to pull himself, and we two can out-row the nigger. Well, good-night, father, and here's to the winner!" said the girl, as she entered the next room.

CHAPTER XII.

PERSISTENT PURSUERS.

THREE days from the date of our last chapter had elapsed. It was almost night. The sun had sunk behind some ragged-looking hills just above the mouth of the Susquehanna—twilight had drawn its gray mantle athwart the sky and pinned it with the evening star. No wind shook the tree tops or ruffled the silvery bosom of the river. And here at a grove of maples, Frank Rolfe had made his third camp.

His fire was built where fire had been built before, for coals and brands were there. He seemed joyous, for as no rain had fallen since the Miniers were there, the traces seemed fresh. After he had partaken of his supper and Tony had eaten, he lighted his pipe for a smoke before lying down for the night. After it was lighted, he said, in a quiet tone:

"We must be near 'em, Tony."

"Maybe nigh, maybe not, Massa Frank. Dere's been no rain dis two week—it am hard to tell when dat last fire was made."

"That's true, Tony; but what was that? What made those bushes crack so?"

"De wind I guess, massa—dis nigger didn't hear nuffin else."

"Perhaps not!" said Rolfe; "this is a delicate game that I'm playing and I feel somewhat nervous."

"You ought to, for here's to the winner!" cried a shrill, clear voice that seemed close by his side.

"Thunder! Who spoke?" cried Rolfe.

"Your master! Beware! you cannot win!" cried the voice.

"Fury and fiends—Red Ralph has followed me!" exclaimed Francis Rolfe.

"Dat he has, Massa Frank," said the negro, with a groan.

"Hal! hal! ha! Here's to the winner!" shouted a voice from the woods and all was still.

"We must go on. I'll not stop here!" said Rolfe, an hour or more after the events just narrated.

"If Red Ralph is after me, I must get ahead of him. Night and day we must push ahead, Tony."

"Jes'so as you like, Massa Frank. I'se more 'fraid ob dat man dan you be."

"Well, get the things into the boat, and we'll start right away. We must get the start of him to-night."

In a few minutes they were off, and if you please, reader, we'll go down the river about a mile, and visit the camp of Red Ralph and his daughter.

The camp of Red Ralph was pitched with due consideration about a couple of rods back from the river-bank in a small hollow, surrounded by a dense growth of small pine trees, so that the light of the camp-fire could not be seen from the river, although its bright and cheerful gleams rose rapidly up above and around the green circle about it.

Red Ralph was alone, employed in frying some meat and boiling some coffee for supper. After these were ready, he lighted his pipe and sat down on a rock, near by, growling as he did so:

"I wonder what keeps Jennie so long! She's a queer gal that—red-headed gals *allers* are. I wish she'd come—I'm as hungry as a marine on short allowance."

"And I'm as dry as a sailor when his grog is stopped," said Jennie, who had approached so noiselessly that the old man had no idea of her near approach until after she had bounded out from amid the pine trees into the circle of the camp.

Excuse us if we pause to tell you how she looked in her boy's rig. She did not appear so long nor so lank in her neat fitting jacket and wide trousers as she did in her woman's dress, nor half so awkward. Her red hair was cut short, revealing quite a white neck—her shoulders seemed broader—in truth, she seemed like a smart, rosy-cheeked, active boy, one of sixteen or seventeen years of age. In the belt which encircled her waist, were a hatchet, knife and a pair of pistols—over her shoulders a powder-horn and bullet-pouch were suspended, and in her hand she held a good double-barreled gun which she carried as if she well knew its use.

"Have you seen any signs of 'em, gal?" asked the old man.

"Well, I have, father; I reckon Francis Rolfe thinks the devil is after him, certain."

"Why, gal? Where is he?"

"Camped about a couple of miles, may be less, above here."

"So you've seen him?"

"Yes, father, and told him he wouldn't win."

"What, you haven't been such a fool as to venture into his camp?" asked Ralph.

"Not exactly, but my *voice* did, and he looked as scared as if he'd been bitten by a rattlesnake," replied Jennie, and then related what she had seen, said and heard, precisely as the reader has already read it. But she did not know that Francis Rolfe and the negro were at that very moment pushing up the river as fast as they could.

"Gal, you was too fast; red-headed gals *allers* are!" said the old man gravely, after she was through. "That infarnal he heathen oughtn't to have known that we were so close in his wake. Like as not he'll up stakes and be off afore daylight, or perhaps he'll attack us here."

"No danger of his finding us here, father," said Jennie. "You can't get a glimpse of our light from the river-side, and I've hid our canoes where no one can find it."

"Well, gal, we must hope for good luck; but you must be more prudent."

"I'll try to after this, father," said the girl. Then she continued: "How is the grub? I am monstrous hungry as well as dry."

After this remark she filled herself a cup of spiritual comfort from the jug, while her father set out the provisions for the evening meal. After the latter was properly attended to, Jennie having offered to keep guard for the first half of the night, the old man wrapped a blanket around his burly form, and threw himself upon the ground with his feet to the fire, Indian fashion. Soon he was in deep slumber.

She kept her watch through without sleeping on her post, and at a proper time aroused her father, who stood guard for the remainder of the night, while she occupied his blanket, and former place before the fire.

He had breakfast ready before the dawn of day, and before the sun had warmed the frosty air of morn, they were once more moving up the river, but with great care and circumspection, keeping close under the land, so as not to be seen by those whose camp they supposed they were approaching.

On arriving within a couple of hundred yards of the place where Jennie had landed the evening before, they carefully pulled to shore and drew their boats up in the bushes. After examining their arms carefully, and preparing for action, they crept cautiously toward the spot where Jennie had last seen Francis Rolfe.

But when they arrived at the spot, they found that the birds had flown.

"They've been gone a good while—the ashes of their fire are cold," said Ralph, as he carefully examined the deserted encampment.

"Yes, likely as not they started right off last night, but even if they did, they can't be far ahead of us," said Jennie. "Remember that with one day behind them in starting, we have caught up with them in three. If we push hard, we'll overtake them again to-night or get ahead of them."

"That's true, gal, and we'll push off, and go ahead as fast as we can."

They were soon moving along up the wild and romantic stream, the banks of which were so grand and picturesquely beautiful, as very frequently to elicit words of admiration from Jennie, who rough as she appeared to be, had within her inner nature a strong perception of the sublime and the beautiful.

Our voyagers kept on up the river for several hours, without coming in sight of those whom they were following, but when it was near night, (they had not stopped for their usual nooning,) they met a bateau coming down, which contained two persons, one an Indian, and the other a white man. As Ralph rowed out near them, he saw that both were evidently under the influence of liquor, the Indian, however, less so than his comrade.

"Have you seen a boat with two men in it, going up the river?" asked Ralph.

"No, me no see 'em," said the Indian, sullenly.

"Have you any neck greasin' in your boat, old fel?" asked the white man, who could hardly sit up in the boat.

"If you mean rum, lots of it."

"Well, give me a quart, and I'll tell you what you want to know. That 'ere copperface is a-lyin'."

"White man fool, cuss, dam," said the Indian angrily trying to move on with the boat.

But old Ralph had his hand on the gunwale, and held it fast while he replied to the tipsy man:

"Tell me the truth and you shall have the rum and a pound of tobacco besides."

"Gi'n us yer fist on that stranger, I'm yer man when yer talk of rum and 'baccy," cried the drunken man.

"Me want 'baccy too," said the Indian relaxing his sternness, as he heard his favorite weed mentioned.

"Well, spit out the truth now, said Ralph, filling up a bottle with rum, while Jennie got the tobacco. "You did see a boat with two men in it?"

"Yes, we did, and got as much brandy as you've given us rum, for promising not to tell any one we met them."

"We got no 'baccy," said the Indian, evidently thinking that the extra price would justify breaking the former promise.

"Was there a white man and a nigger in the boat?" asked Jennie.

"Yes, sir, there was a nigger and a white man in that 'ere boat, and the nigger would ha' been the smartest lookin' fel of the two, if he hadn't had a kind of a landmark cut on his forehead," said the white man.

"Twass them. How far ahead are they?" asked Ralph.

"That depends on circumstances," said the white man, taking a long pull at the rum, and then handing it over to the Indian. "If they're hurryin', they might be five miles, or even ten from here; but if not, it's likely they'll camp somewhere above the next bend, say about four or five miles from here."

"Then we'd better push on," said Ralph, releasing his hold upon the other boat, and resuming his oar.

They had not gone more than a couple of rods before the drunken stranger again hailed them.

"What's wanting now?" asked Ralph.

"Have you ever run the Buttermilk Falls, old fellow?" shouted the man.

"No, what of them?" asked Ralph.

"Why, they're easier to run down than go up. Ha! ha! ha!" yelled the man, as he toppled down into the bottom of his boat.

Ralph resumed his oar, studying the while the meaning of a question often asked by our old raftsmen nowadays, when they want to puzzle a greenhorn on his first trip down the river.

They toiled on until night closed in, keeping a good lookout for Rolfe and Tony, but an unsuccessful one, and then landed for fear they might pass them in the dark. This night they took extra pains to conceal their landing-place and fire, for they knew not how near to Rolfe they were, and, as the sequel will prove, it was well for them that they did.

CHAPTER XIII.

INDIAN CONFEDERATES.

It was nearly night when Francis Rolfe and Tony, who were worn out with labor, having pulled all day as well as most of the night before, meeting no one but the two persons whom we described in our last chapter, determined to land and rest. As they turned their bow to the shore, they observed the smoke of a camp-fire ascending from amid a clump of trees, and on nearing the land, saw a couple of Indian canoes drawn up on the pebbly beach.

"If these are friendly Indians, there will be a double safety to us if we encamp with them," said Rolfe, to the negro.

"If dey isn't fr'en'ly, dey can't be no wuss dan dat debbil Red Ralph," said Tony.

The Indians were attracted to the beach by the noise of the approaching boat. They were four in number, grim, stalwart, rough-looking fellows, whose clothing consisted of a blanket, hunting-shirt and moccasins.

"What does the pale-face want?" asked one who appeared to be their leader, as he was the oldest, when Rolfe stepped to the shore.

"We want to camp and eat and rest—we are tired and hungry!" said Rolfe.

"Ugh! Got fire-water for poor red-man?"

"Yes; fire-water to warm him and make his heart glad—tobacco for him to smoke when he thinks of the spirit-land!" said Rolfe, producing a brandy-flask and a plug of tobacco.

"Good! Red-man likes fire-water. He will smoke peace with his pale-faced brother, and with the man that is like the cloud."

He alluded to Tony in his last remark.

"Why is pale-face so tired?" asked another of the Indians.

"Because enemies are on his track who want to kill him. He has come far since the sun rose."

"Ugh! If the enemies of the pale-face come here, the red-man will take their scalps and give them to their pale-faced brother that he may hang them up in his lodge!" said the Indian leader, as he led the way to the encampment, while Tony brought up such things from the boat as Rolfe directed.

On arriving there he found fish, venison and wild turkeys already on the fire, and soon with the aid of his liquor and tobacco, was on very friendly terms with the Indians. After he had eaten, the chief—whose name was Miontic—asked Rolfe who it was that was following him, and why he feared them.

"I know not how many they are—one is a red-faced white man—his hair is red, but his heart is black, and he would kill me while I slept if he could."

"S'pose Miontic go and see?" said the Indian. "Me great chief."

"If Miontic and his braves will go, I will give him and them plenty of fire-water to warm their hearts, and paint for the battle—beads and painted cloths to carry to their squaws; and if they will kill my enemies, I will be their friend forever, and will make them rich with many presents."

"It is good—we will go," said Miontic.

"When?" asked Rolfe eagerly, for now he hoped by the aid of an Indian's cunning and cruelty to rid himself of his dreaded pursuer.

"When the sun sleeps," replied the Indian. "There is no moon. It is dark; they'll camp—we'll go along down the river and smell fire. Then we find camp and take 'em scalps!"

"My red brother speaks wisely and well," said Rolfe, pressing him to take more brandy.

"Fire-water is good, but it make too much talkee, talkee!" said the chief, who well knew the effect of liquor.

"If you don't want dis nigger along, I'd radder stay an' take care ob de camp, Massa Frank!" said Tony, as he noticed the preparations for the night expedition.

"Well, stay here, and don't let the camp-fire go down," said Rolfe, as he went off with the Indians.

CHAPTER XIV.

DRUNK AND ADRIPT.

It was not more than a mile below the encampment of the Indians to the spot where Red Ralph and his daughter had hauled up their boat, and stopped to rest for the night. They could have seen the light of the Indians' camp fire had it not been for a short point of wooded land which intervened.

Ralph and Jennie, as we before stated, had determined not to build a fire that night. They merely took a cold bite and a cup or two of their favorite beverage, rum, and then lay down upon their blankets near their boat.

"Hark, father!" whispered Jennie, after they had lain there a half hour or so; "I hear the plash of paddles."

"Hist, gal! so do I, and voices, too. Lay low, and don't breathe loud if you can help it," replied Ralph.

Ralph and his daughter could distinctly see two canoes, one containing two and the other three persons, which were paddling down the river, slowly and with caution, keeping in near by the shore.

"Can you make them out, father?" asked Jennie, in a whisper.

"Hist, gal! Not a lisp, if you'd live. There's five on 'em, maybe they're after us."

It seemed to the old man that this might indeed be so, for slackening their paddles, the canoes drew alongside to hold a consultation.

"How far my brother think he come since he saw his enemies?" inquired Miontic.

"Far—very far—we traveled all the night and day!" responded Rolfe.

"It is the blasted heathen!" muttered Ralph, as he recognized the speaker.

"Ugh! It may be long way before we catch 'em—but Miontic will have their scalps before sleeps!" said the Indian.

"He means us, father!" said Jennie in a whisper.

"I 'spect he does, gal; but he sha'n't have 'em without a tussle," replied Ralph, in the same guarded tone.

The canoes now moved off, and soon the plash of their paddles could be heard no more.

"A thousand curses on 'em—it was us they were after. Rolfe has hired Indians to kill and scalp us," said Ralph bitterly. "What shall we do, gal?"

"Get out of this latitude as soon as possible," said the girl, uncocking her gun, which she had prepared for use while danger was so near.

"Right, gal. I like your spunk. You're worth a dozen boys. Let's be off."

In a few moments their boat was launched, and they were silently but rapidly moving up the river. It was not long before they rounded the intervening point alluded to. Soon after Jennie paused at her oar and said in a low voice:

"I smell smoke, father."

"So do I, gal—let's land and reconnoiter," said the old man.

The boat's prow was noiselessly turned in to the shore and as they struck the beach they discovered the boat of Rolfe which Ralph at once recognized. As there was no one in it, they backed their own boat off and landed a few rods above it. Then concealing their boat, and taking their arms with them, Ralph and his daughter proceeded to the now

dimly-burning camp-fire of the Indians to see who was there. Proceeding cautiously they soon discovered the fire, which was fast dying away, but by its flickering light they saw the negro with a rum-jug by his side. His loud snoring attested the depth of his slumbers.

"Hadn't I better kill the black serpent?" asked Ralph. "Twould be one less out of the way."

The girl thought a moment, and then said:

"No, father, I reckon not. He's drunk, and I'd tote him down to the boat, take it out into the river, and set it adrift. If they find him well and good, if they don't so much the better. Let him drift off, and his master 'll think he has run off with the boat maybe and give up the look after us."

"Mayhap 'twould be so! Gal you've a good head. You hold the guns, and let me see if the nigger is drunk enough to be toted without waking."

Having handed the weapons to Jennie, Ralph applied the toe of his heavy boot not very gently to the shins of Tony.

"Wake up here, imp of darkness," he cried.

The negro only snored a little louder, and turned half-over, his head now so close to the embers that the kinky wool was fairly crisped.

"Drunk or asleep, eh, snowball?" asked Ralph, as he gave Tony another kick.

"As drunk as a beggar on full allowance; tote him down, father," said Jennie.

Ralph shouldered the drunken negro, and carried him down to Rolfe's boat, into which he pitched him as carelessly as he would a bale of smuggled goods. The shock did not awaken the dorky.

They then brought their own boat down, and taking Rolfe's boat in tow, carried it out into the middle of the stream.

They were about to cast it off and set it adrift, when Jennie remarked:

"Father, we've got a couple of empty jugs in our boat—suppose we swap 'em off for a couple of full ones from Rolfe's store?"

"I reckon an exchange isn't exactly a robbery," said Ralph. "I'm agreeable to your proposition, Jennie."

The transfer was made, and then Jennie said:

"I'd like to let Rolfe know how much smarter we are than he. Let me write him a line."

"You can do it, gal, if you think best; and while you're writin' I'll proceed to make my mark," said Ralph, drawing a sharp-pointed knife from his pocket. With this he cut the mark of an anchor on each of the black cheeks of the negro—not cutting very deep, but sufficiently to leave the marks indelible.

"There he is, stamped with the anchor brand," said Ralph, as he finished. "What have you written, gal?"

"Only this, father," said Jennie, reading the scrawl which she had hastily traced:

"MR. FRANK ROLFE:—Hereby you will find a package of bad spirits, destined for a warmer region, but consigned to your care, as you are bound in that direction yourself. It is marked with the cross and anchor. We wish you and your red allies a pleasant cruise in search of the winners in every game."

"RED RALPH AND HIS SAUCY DAUGHTER."

"Capital, gal! He'll be madder than a hornet with its sting pulled out, when he reads that. But we're losing time. Let the nigger go now. Stow the note where it'll be found if they see the boat."

This last direction was obeyed. Then Ralph and Jennie, refreshed with a draught of Ralph's good liquor, sprung to their oars with a will which soon carried them far up the river, while Tony was unconsciously drifting down upon its rapid current.

Miontic and his men, carefully skirting the shore, kept on down the river for some fifteen or eighteen miles without seeing a sign of those whom they sought. Miontic now advised that they should lie by until daylight, for fear of having passed the others. Rolfe was obliged to acquiesce, and taking care to keep the Indians awake with a moderate quantity of fire-water, he tried to curb his impatience until the sun rose.

But before the dawn one of the Indians discovered in the dim gloom, far out on the river tide, some dark object moving with the current, and gave the alarm.

The eye of Miontic had only glanced upon it, when he said:

"Tis a pale-face's boat—not a canoe like Miontic's."

"Perhaps it is them going down the river! Let us follow at once," said Rolfe, eagerly.

The Indians started, and just as the gray of dawn began to make objects distinguishable, they reached the boat.

"Ten thousand curses—'tis Tony, drunk and adrift," cried Rolfe, as he recognized his negro.

"What is this?" he added, as he saw a note pinned to the clothing of the negro. He read it, and at once comprehended all. He gnashed his teeth, and swore fearfully.

"What does that tell to my brother?" asked Miontic, pointing to the paper.

"That my enemies have been at our camp. See how they have marked that drunken brute, there."

"Ugh! They tattoo much deep," said Miontic, looking at the anchor marks on Tony's face.

"Why they no scalp him, when they ketch him?"

"I wish they had—curses upon him," said Rolfe, violently kicking the negro who opened his eyes under such rough treatment, he having in a degree slept off the strength of the liquor.

"Mornin', Massa Frank," said he, stupidly, not realizing where and how he was. "Have you ketch dat debbil, Red Ralph?"

"Caught Red Ralph, you brother of Satan? Feel

at your cheeks and see what he's been doing to you, you drunken fool."

"Ki—my cheek feel like I've been in a briar-patch, and my shin like a fall ober a log-heap. Why, whar's de boat—what's I doin' out here in de ribber?" cried Tony, looking around.

"So you pretend you don't know what has happened to you during the night, do you?"

"Fore de Lord I don't, Massa Frank. Arter you and de Masser Injines been gwine away, I jess took one long drink o' brandy, an' den I poke up de fire and lay down for snooze a little while. Den I wake up an' find myself here—dat's all I know, Massa Frank, if I nebber say anudder word!"

"If my brother wants to find his enemies, he will be wise to go up the river, not drift down!" said Miontic.

"You speak truly," said Rolfe. "They have undoubtedly passed us. From this letter, I infer that they have seen us, for they speak of you."

"Ugh! what do the enemies of my brother say of Miontic? Do they fear for their scalps?"

"No—they laugh at him—they say his eyes are weak and he cannot see them—his canoe is slow and it cannot catch them—his knife is dull and will not take their scalps!" replied Rolfe, who, with wily cunning, knew how by such misrepresentations to touch the pride of the warrior and arouse every faculty of his savage nature.

"Ugh!" he cried, as his eyes flashed fiercely. "They shall see if Miontic is blind, if his arm is weak or his knife dull. Miontic will drink their blood—his warriors shall dance around their scalps! They shall die. How many do they number?"

"By this letter only two," replied Rolfe.

"Ugh! if they were many, like the trees on yonder island, Miontic would cut them all down!" said the chief.

"Let's pull to the shore and eat some food; I have plenty in my boat," said Rolfe, and then we will move up the river and pursue them; we will be strong and will not rest until we overtake them."

"My brother speaks wise words," said Miontic, becoming more calm than he had been.

They now landed on an island and refreshed themselves, and there for a time we will leave them.

CHAPTER XV.

"RED RALPH, AS I LIVE!"

ONEONTA, the beautiful Indian maiden, is seated on a little knoll at the mouth of the Chokenut, a pretty stream that tumbles into the Susquehanna nearly opposite the mouth of her father's wigwam. The canoe of her father and another one are drawn up on the beach, a few paces distant from her. She is engaged in working a beaded hunting-belt. It is for Gustave Minier, who stands as if spellbound before her.

Her father, the noble Mahaca, is fishing with Eugene but a little ways up the stream. Why is not Gustave with them? Is it possible that Cupid, even here in the wild wood, can have spread a snare and entangled his wild, free and careless heart? Let us hear his words.

"Oneonta is very lovely. In the land of the pale-faces there were none so beautiful as she. She is more beautiful to me than the stars at night, or the flowers by day."

The words of my brother are sweet, like music from the birds in the daytime, but when night comes then the birds do not sing," replied Oneonta quietly, not raising her eyes from the work before her.

"But my song shall last always," said Gustave. "I will ever sing for Oneonta. Earth can be made a paradise with such an angel as you are."

"My father and your brother come," said Oneonta, looking up the stream where approached the Indian and Eugene, with heavy strings of speckled trout.

"Before they come only tell me that Oneonta is not angry because I love her."

"The flower is not sad when the sun smiles upon it," said the pretty girl in a sweet tone, looking up at him with kindness beaming in her dark eyes.

"Your language is ever figurative, but I believe I understand you, lovely Oneonta," said Gustave, with a sigh. "I wish you were mine; then I feel I should not have anything else to ask for on this side of heaven."

"Well, what luck in hunting, Gustave?" said Eugene, as he approached. "See, Mahaca and I have caught as many trout as we can carry."

"I haven't felt like hunting. I've been watching the tiny fingers of Oneonta as she worked upon that beautiful belt for me," said Gustave, blushing he scarcely knew why.

"Look! strange canoe on the water! Pale-face canoe; an old man and a young one," said Mahaca, pointing down the river toward the dwelling of the Miniers, which stood in plain view.

"And they row rapidly, as if they were in haste," said Eugene, whose eye rested instantly upon that which the quick eye of the Indian had first discerned.

"Let's paddle down and see what it all means," said Gustave.

Soon they were in their canoes.

"Will not Mahaca and Oneonta come to our house?" asked Eugene, as they shoved off.

"Not now; strangers are there. If they bring bad news, and Mahaca can help his brothers, he will go," said the Indian gravely.

Only a look was exchanged between Oneonta and Gustave, but it spoke volumes.

"You love that girl, Gustave!" said Eugene, as soon as they were out of Mahaca's hearing.

"More than life, Eugene!" replied the other, warmly. "But who can they be whom father has met at the landing? Mahaca's keen eyes told the truth—it is an old man and a boy."

"Red Ralph, as I live!—who is that with him and what can he be doing up here?" said Gustave, urging on the boat more rapidly.

In a few moments the two young men had reached the shore, where Mr. Minier had just met and welcomed Ralph.

"How are you, my kind friend, and what has brought you up here?" cried Eugene, as he grasped the old man's rough hand.

"A considerable deal of hard pullin', Mr. Rolfe," said Ralph, returning the friendly grasp of Eugene. "But you'll soon have less welcome visitors, if I'm not mistaken."

"Whom? What do you mean?" asked Eugene.

"Why, that rascally brother o' yours, and his black nigger and four red niggers have tried to catch me for eight or ten days. Sometimes they've been ahead, and then they haven't, but they're after your scalps and mine."

"Have they seen you yet?"

"No, I believe not, thank fortun' and my red-headed gal there—you see that's my Jennie, rigged up in boy's clothes, there."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Jennie, for not recognizing you in—your strange attire, although this is not the first time that you have donned a disguise to serve me and my Mignonette," said Eugene. "If you will go to our house, she will welcome you, and provide you with other apparel."

"Thank you, sir," said Jennie, with a blush. "I don't want to change my rig for the present, for it's a handy one to work and fight in, and if you'll listen to father, he'll tell you that very likely there'll be fighting to do here before long."

"You must stand in need of refreshments," said Mr. Minier—"come up to the house."

"I can't say but what I am a leetle dry and wolfish," said Ralph, as he shouldered his arms, and followed by his daughter, accompanied the party to the house.

Here Jennie was introduced to Eugene's sweet wife, who at first did not recognize her in her male attire, but who warmly welcomed her when she was informed who it was.

"I've not forgotten you or your kindness, lady," said Jennie, as she pulled from beneath her vest the necklace of pearls which Mignonette had given her on her wedding-night.

"I see that you have not, and we are all very grateful to you and your father," said the young wife, as she hastened to get refreshments as desired by her father and husband.

After these were freely partaken of, a consultation was held as to the means and manner of meeting an attack, should one be made. Ere the sun went down, the stores and ammunition of Ralph were transferred from his boat to the house, and all the weapons loaded, ready for use.

A regular guard was set, and Eugene's large and faithful dog let loose to range around the dwelling. Night set in, clear and calm, but no alarm was heard, and our tired voyagers had a long and refreshing sleep.

The sun had been for two or three hours on its day's travel before Ralph and his daughter awakened, and refreshed by the morning meal, made their appearance outside of the house. When they did so, they found Mr. Minier and his son with Eugene seated on a little knoll near the door, with Mahaca and his dark but lovely daughter.

"No signs of the enemy, yet sir, eh?" said Ralph, as he approached Mr. Minier.

"Not yet my good friend," replied the latter.

"Ugh. Look there. See strange canoe," said Mahaca, at this moment pointing to a canoe slowly paddling up the stream, with but a single Indian in it.

All their eyes were instantly turned to that which the quick glance of the Indian man first discovered.

"Do you think you would recognize any of the Indians who were with Francis?" asked Eugene of Red Ralph.

"I'm not overly and above sart'in," replied

the old man. "I've not had a nigh look at 'em."

"I might remember their voices," said Jennie, "I've heard them often enough, I think."

Meanwhile as they conversed, the Indian landed. It was Miontic. Tall, of powerful build, with a snake-like eye, and with cunning and treachery strongly marked in his swarthy features, he seemed no despicable foe. But deeming himself unknown, he approached the house in friendly guise, his object probably being to learn the strength of the party, and see how they were situated. He only carried a gun and hunting-knife, his tomahawk had been laid aside. Not so his pipe—but the tobacco-pouch at his side was empty.

Coming up to the party he addressed Minier, as the eldest, evidently supposing him to be the leader.

"How do, white father?" said he. "Me poor Indian—me want to trade—want buy rum and tobac."

"Whence do you come?" asked Minier.

"Miontic come from the great lakes of the North!" replied the Indian.

"That's a lie!" muttered Jennie, "I have heard you talk before."

The Indian heard her speak, but did not distinctly catch what she said. He again addressed Mr. Minier:

"Will my white father sell poor Indian rum and tobac?"

"What have you got to pay for it?" asked Minier.

"Ugh—money, good!" said Miontic, producing several coins of gold and silver from his pouch.

"Where did you get it?" asked Minier, noticing how the Indian's eyes wandered about the place.

"From the French pale-faces me get 'em," said Miontic, with a fierce scowl.

"That's very likely," said Gustave looking at the money. "The French use *British* money, eh?"

"Pale-face boy—fool!" muttered Miontic bitterly, as he turned his back on the last speaker.

"Not fool enough to be taken in by such a red greasy varmint as you are, if he is young!" growled Red Ralph. "Where's Frank Rolfe, you p'ison sarpint?"

"Miontic don't know what pale-face means!" said Miontic, looking Ralph in the eye.

"What do you know?" asked Jennie.

"That you are a squaw!" said Miontic haughtily and contemptuously.

"Yes, and smart enough to circumvent you and him who hires you," said Jennie, while her eyes flashed as haughtily as his did.

"S'pose you sell no rum and tobac, me go off," said Miontic, addressing Minier.

"I will give you some tobacco, but no rum—it is a poison which does you no good," said Minier, going into the house and getting a couple of plugs of tobacco, which he handed to the Indian, refusing the proffered pay.

"Good-by—me come again," said Miontic, glancing revengefully at Red Ralph and his daughter.

"When you do we'll be ready to give you a warm reception," said Gustave, in a meaning tone.

The Indian did not appear to heed his remark but marched sullenly to his canoe and paddled off down the river.

"What does Mahaca think of that warrior?" asked Eugene.

"He is a snake in the grass—he spoke with a forked tongue. Oneonta stay here—Mahaca go scout!" replied the Delaware chief, as he moved rapidly back from the river until he was in the woods and then swiftly took a course parallel with the river.

Mahaca was gone about an hour and a half, and his looks when he returned gave evidence that his speed had not been little.

"Has my brother seen anything suspicious?" asked Mr. Minier.

"Mahaca has seen the enemies of his brothers. They are sharpening their knives for battle—their hearts are hot and their faces are dark toward him!" replied the Indian.

"How many are there of them?" asked Gustave.

"Four red-men—one pale face—one whose face is like a burned stump," replied Mahaca, holding up a finger for each that he enumerated.

"Six in all. Well, here we are, five men good and true—"

"And one woman who can shoot as good as any of you," said Jennie, interrupting Gus in his calculations.

"We've the advantage of a house to fight in," continued Gus.

"Yes, and I guess we can tan 'em out," added Ralph. "I don't mean no insult to you, Master Eugene; but just so sure as that weazen-headed brother o' yours puts his long corpus in range of my gun, if it don't taste lead, then eat me for a land-shark—that's all."

"I don't know that I could blame you, friend Ralph," said Eugene; "but he must not fall by my hand, if he should fall. Though he has deeply wronged me, and now seeks most probably to destroy us all, I cannot forget that the same blood runs in our veins, and the same mother bore us."

"You are right, my son," said Mr. Minier, "and if we are attacked and master them, as I trust in God we shall, let him be taken alive if possible. We must, during the day, make preparations for an attack," said Mr. Minier.

"Every log, stump and bush, within range of gunshot must be removed so that they can find no shelter. Our boats must be drawn up and concealed. Mahaca, will you help us?"

"My brother has been good to Mahaca and his child. He will fight for him, and dance around the scalps of his enemies," replied the Indian, gravely.

"Thanks, Mahaca," replied Mr. Minier; after which they all made preparations for defense.

When Miontic left Minier and his party, his course was laid directly down the river. He kept well in with the northern shore for about four miles, and then suddenly turned into a small narrow passage, the mouth of which was almost hidden by overhanging trees and bushes. Up this he pushed his canoe several hundred yards, and then landed at the foot of a steep and rocky hill which was crowned by a thick growth of hemlocks. Here, close under the cliff, their fire was made of small dry branches so that it would give no smoke, though its warm fierce blaze answered all purposes of heat, where Rolfe and his servant and the other Indians encamped. Fish, fowl, and flesh were cooking, but the uncorked jugs which lay around, betokened that their spiritual supplies had given out.

"Well, Miontic, have you seen them?" asked Rolfe, as the Indian landed.

"Ugh! Me see 'em, yes. Me get tobac—no get rum."

"How many of them?"

"One—two—three—four—white man—one Injin—four squaw," replied Miontic. "One squaw, sassy—dress all same like man."

"Yes, that's Red Ralph's daughter," said Rolfe. "But you said you saw an Indian there. Who was he?"

"Don't know. Not a Susquehanna Injun, him. Delaware, maybe Mohawk."

"Friendly to them of course, or he wouldn't be with them. Well, do you think we can kill 'em off, Miontic, and get their rum and powder and tobacco? They've plenty of them," said Rolfe, appealing to the cupidity of the Indian.

"Yes, s'pose we catch 'em 'sleep."

"You gave them no cause of alarm?"

"No—Miontic say he come from the great lakes of the North. Red-head squaw say she no believe him—but Miontic big brave, he no talk with squaw; s'pose they sleep to-night, to-morrow we have plenty scalps, plenty rum."

"Well, if we've night-work to do, I'll lay down and sleep now," replied Rolfe, as he cast himself down upon a bearskin robe.

"Dis nigger 'll do dat way too, 'fore soon," said Tony, as he tore off a leg of his wild turkey, and began to eat it.

CHAPTER XVI.

"BROTHER, SPARE MY LIFE!"

ALTHOUGH the day had been very calm and pleasant, scarce a breath of wind ruffling the water or making leaf or limb quiver, and though but one cloud was visible at sunset, yet Mahaca looked grave at that hour, and said:

"Big storm come by and by. Heap wind! Heap thunder! Lightning heap!"

"How does my red brother know?" asked Mr. Minier.

The chief pointed to the west, where the sun seemed to be sinking into a black cloud, a cloud which was rising rapidly. In fact, it came up so fast that in a short time the whole western sky was darkened, and a chilly shadow seemed to be crawling swiftly along the earth. The whole party went out to look at it, and wondering that while it gathered so fast and rose so quickly, no wind was felt where they stood. The air became so heavy that breathing seemed difficult. It was cold and seemed to pierce every frame.

"Come in and keep powder dry. Storm break quick now," said Mahaca, entering the rude but strong and well roofed house.

And even as he spoke, a long quivering chain of lightning sprung like a writhing serpent from its bed in the far west, and rushed like fire along through the sky—crash, like the sound of an hundred cannon fired at one flash, came the deafening thunder—then flash after flash of lightning followed, until the air seemed filled with fire, and the ears were stunned with the deafening thunder.

Suddenly the lightning ceased—seeming to have exhausted its food. The thunder was heard no more. But a sound like the rushing of an army of horses was heard. In a moment it came—the hurricane. They could hear, even above its tempest howl, the crash of the great trees as they fell in the forest.

Soon the wind too ceased as if it had made one mighty effort and burst in doing it. Then the rain, came down in torrents. The sublimity of the storm was passed.

"This is something of a storm, friend Ralph," said Eugene.

"Rayther. It 'minds me of a West India hurricane. I've seen them blow the hair off a feller's head clean. A hurricane like this isn't to be sneezed at, at sea."

"It'll do one thing, I reckon," said Gustave. "Our enemies will not be likely to attack us to-night. Will they Mahaca?"

"Rain stop before morning," said the chief. "Then if all dark and still, they think we sleep, they come."

"The only thing is to keep a careful watch all night," said Mr. Minier. "We must be constantly on guard. Let the door be well bolted—the back window ought to have boards put before it. It is not likely they'll attack us while it rains, this way."

"Where is my brother's dog?" asked Mahaca.

"Out in his kennel, by the side of the house. If any one approaches he will scent them."

"Good, much good," said the Indian as he drew his blanket around him, and cast himself down upon the floor near the fire.

For some hours the rain poured incessantly, and the inmates of the house had good reason to be thankful for such comfortable shelter. But at last, long after midnight, the rain also ceased. The angry rush of the river could be plainly heard, showing that it had risen very high, but the sky was still hung with clouds, and nothing could be seen twenty feet from the house, although many a glance was sent through the loop-holes by the anxious watchers within. By direction of the Indian, all the lights except the fire had been put out.

It was within an hour or so of daylight, when the Indian who had been apparently asleep was seen to move, and cautiously to creep toward the door. Here he laid his ear close to the floor and listened. Seeing that Minier was about to speak from his seat by the fire place, he whispered.

"No speak. They come—one—two—three—four—five—six. They all come."

At the same moment the dog was heard growling in his kennel.

They could plainly hear that the door was gently tried by some one outside. But it could not be moved. Then steps very low and light could be heard moving about the house as if they were reconnoitering. Soon a heavy knock was heard at the door.

"Who is there?" asked Mr. Minier.

"Poor Injun. Him sick—him wet, him hungry. Let come in," said a voice which was readily recognized as that of Miontic.

"Wait till daylight, and I'll think about it," said Mr. Minier.

"Me sick, me die 'fore then," said the Indian faintly, as if in great suffering.

"Then die, you red cuss, we know you," said Red Ralph loudly. "If you don't clear off, you'll eat lead afore long."

Another voice was heard outside now. It was that of Francis Rolfe.

"Ho, within there," he cried. "If you would save your lives, open your doors, and give these savages some food and drink. There are thirty of them, and I cannot restrain them, though I have tried to do so. For the sake of your own lives and those of your women, open your doors."

"Thirty of you, eh? You must have got drunk early to see double as fast as that, master Frank."

"Fire through the door," yelled Rolfe in his anger. "We'll give 'em no quarter."

The Indians, and himself, and negro, now fired at the door, but as it was composed of hewn slabs some six inches thick, and hard wood, their balls did not penetrate. The next moment, four shots were fired through the port-

holes of the house toward them, but it was too dark for those inside to take any aim.

"Anybody hurt?" asked Rolfe.

"Fore God, Massa Frank, I blebe one ob deir bullets hit dis nigger on de head, but no go through."

"What shall we do Miontic," asked Rolfe.

"Take hatchet, and cut hole in door," said Indian.

"The idea is good," said the villain; "standing close before the door they cannot reach us from the loop-holes in the wall."

In an instant, three or four sharp hatchets were hewing away at the door.

"It is my turn to do something now, Eugene," said Mignonette.

As the young wife said this, she took a kettle of boiling water from over the fire where it had been hanging.

Up into the second story of the log-house by means of a ladder, Mignonette now quietly moved. In a moment she was directly over the villains who were at work below, and through the wide cracks left purposely there, could partially distinguish their dark forms. In an instant the boiling liquid was dashed down upon them.

With a scream of anguish—a yell of agony, the Indians dropped their hatchets and fled, yelling as they did so.

"By Moses! the woman has given them fire!" cried Ralph. "Let's out and arter 'em now."

"Let the dog loose!" shouted Eugene, as he unbarred the door and rushed out with the rest.

In a few moments the party heard the fierce barking of the dog, as if he had brought something to bay. They next saw the flash of a gun which had missed fire—then, as they hurried up, they saw the dog bound forward and seize a human being, and as both struggled upon the ground together, they came up.

"Off, Thunderbolt! off!" shouted Eugene.

"Who is he?—what is he?" asked Jennie, coming up at this moment.

"That we'll see as soon as I can drag the dog off!" replied Eugene.

"Brother! Spare my life! God—the dog!" gasped Frank Rolfe, as he half rose from the ground.

"Off, Thunderbolt, off!" shouted Eugene. "Jennie, Gus—keep the dog on the track of the rest. I can manage him. If you overtake the Indians, don't spare them."

As the dog released him, and followed Gus and Jennie, Frank Rolfe rose to his feet, not attempting to take up the gun which he had dropped. Nor did he dare to raise his eyes to the brother who stood before him, not offering to do him further harm.

"What have I ever done, brother, that you should thus follow me and seek to destroy my life?" continued Eugene.

The lips of Francis turned whiter and quivered, but still he did not reply.

"Speak, Francis—in what did I ever wrong you?"

"You took Mignonette Minier away from me!" hoarsely replied Francis.

"Took Mignonette from you?" cried Eugene in a tone of astonishment. "Why, you never spoke to her, except to insult her."

"Nevertheless I loved her!" said Francis.

"And had she loved you, with all your pride, would you have married her?"

At this instant the loud cries of Ralph, Gustave and Jennie announced another capture, and Eugene hastened toward them. At once Francis Rolfe picked up his gun and turned back toward the landing where the Indians had left their canoes. As he did so, he saw a light and lovely form come bounding toward him from the direction of the house. And as he recognized her who came, he could scarcely repress a shout of joy. It was Mignonette, and in the instant she did not recognize him. He turned his back that she might not see his face, while he muttered:

"Fortune favors me now. Ha! Eugene, 'I am the winner now.'"

"Dear Eugene!" cried the lovely woman almost breathlessly, "have you caught any of them? Why do you not speak?" she added as she reached the side of him whom she supposed to be her husband.

He turned suddenly and she discovered her fearful mistake. A sudden faintness came upon her, she sunk helpless at his feet. To tear a scarf from her shoulders and gag and bind her, was but the work of an instant. Then snatching his gun from the ground and raising her light form in his arms, the villain rushed to the spot where the Indians had left their canoes. Into one of these he cast her, and launching it, seized a paddle and turned its

prow up the river. Soon, unobserved by any one, he had gained the shadowy cover of the lofty round hill before mentioned, and was paddling along its rocky sides. As he came abreast of the wigwam of Mahaca, he was frightened, for he thought that he was discovered, but a second glance told him that the usual occupants were absent. Not being supplied with provisions, he landed and discovering furs and dried meats in abundance, he made free to help himself liberally. But his delay was brief, and fearing pursuit, he resumed his paddle and dashed forward, now keeping under cover of an island, then seeking the shadowy side of the river where the banks rose the highest.

It was not long before Mignonette recovered from her temporary swoon, but it was only to recognize the horror of her situation. Though she could not speak, her tears appealed to him for pity, but all in vain they fell. He scarcely deigned to look upon her, but plied his paddle with a strong but nervous arm.

CHAPTER XVII.

ABDUCTED.

WHEN Eugene reached the spot where Ralph, Jennie, Gustave, and Mahaca were, he found all but the Indian roaring with laughter.

"Look at this nigger," cried Ralph, convulsed with laughter, as he pointed to an object kneeling before him. "See, he's been so scared, he's turned white."

"Oh de Lor'—Massa 'Gene—all dis nigger's skin am scald off, wool and all," groaned Toby.

The negro had indeed been scalded white, and was a painful as well as a ludicrous sight.

"It serves you right, you son of the devil," cried Ralph. "I hope your master is no better off."

"By the way, where is he, Eugene?" asked young Minier.

"I let him go, Gus!" replied the other. "He was my brother, and I couldn't help it."

"God grant we may have no cause to regret your merciful act," said Mr. Minier, the elder. "He is as dangerous as he is vile."

"Had we better pursue the Indians further?" asked Gustave.

"No, I think not. They have had a lesson which will keep them away from us, and they're far off before now," said Eugene.

"What shall we do with the nigger?" asked Gustave.

"Hang him up," cried Ralph.

"Oh de Lor'! oh Massa 'Gene dis nigger never had been bad if 'twere not for Massa Frank. Jes' leff me go back to Jeems ribber, and dis nigger nebber'll come in de Susquehanny country no more. Or jess leff me work for you. I'll be as faithful as an ole blind hoss on a mill gear. Don't let 'em hang dis nigger—he most dead a'ready."

"Let him go with his master," said Eugene.

"I wonder whar he am?" asked Tony.

"Somewhere in the woods. Hunt him up, but don't you come near the house if you don't want lead in you," said Eugene; then turning to the others, he added: "Let us go back to the house. Breakfast will not taste amiss after our watching all night and exercise this morning."

"Where is my Mignonette?" asked Eugene, as he entered the house on his return.

"Did you not meet her? She went out to meet you a short time since," said Mrs. Minier.

"My heavens, no! How foolish in her! And strange too that we could have passed her. Which way did she go?"

"I must go and look for her!" cried Eugene.

"Come, Gus—come, Ralph; we must defer breakfast until she is found."

Eugene now hurried out, shouting her name loudly as he went; but all in vain. No reply came; and after two or three hours' search, the party returned disheartened and gloomy, bringing Tony with them, whom they had found near where he had left them.

"How did your accursed master and his party get here?" asked Eugene of Tony. "Speak! quick, you hound, or I'll tear you limb from limb!"

"Wid de Injuns in deir canoes. Massa 'Gene; dat's de way we come. We leff our boat a little way down de ribber."

"Where did you leave the canoes?" asked the wretched husband.

"On de bank ob de ribber jess below de house, Massa 'Gene," replied the negro.

Down to the spot the negro indicated the party now turned their footsteps.

Only one canoe could be found there, but the heavy boot-mark of Frank Rolfe's foot, as he shoved off the other, was still visible. And

there, close by the water-side, was a small bracelet which had been worn by Mignonette.

"Oh, God! he is gone, and has taken her off. Why did I not slay him on the spot?" moaned Eugene, ready to sink to the earth.

"We must launch our boat and follow him!" cried Ralph. "He cannot get far down the river before we will overtake him."

"Yes, the boats—the boats!" cried Jennie.

Gustave and Mr. Minier, aided by the Indian, were already launching the boat of Ralph, which, being the lightest, would pull faster than the other and heavier boats of Mr. Minier.

Not a thought entered the mind of any of the party that the fugitives might have gone up the river, instead of down.

The party was soon ready for a start. It consisted of Eugene and Red Ralph and Jennie in the larger boat—two to pull and one to steer, and Gustave and Mahaca in the canoe that had been left. Mr. Minier was to stay with Mrs. Minier and Oneonta to take care of the now desolate home. They were well armed, but took no provisions.

In almost less time than we have occupied in describing their preparations they were ready and off, swiftly as ashen oars and paddles could propel them.

They had not gone more than four or five miles down the river when a shrill cry was heard from Mahaca, who was a few yards in the lead. Upon casting their eyes down the stream, the boat in which Francis and the negro had ascended the river was seen about a mile ahead of them. Only four persons could be seen in it, and they seemed unused to its management, for they made but poor headway, and the pursuing party now exerting all their strength, rapidly gained upon them.

Seeing this, the prow of the leading boat was turned in toward the southern shore.

"Pull, father, pull Master Eugene," cried Jennie. "They're making for the shore."

Exerting every muscle, the party gained fast. Soon they were almost within gunshot. They now could see that the leading boat contained four Indians, but in it, or elsewhere they could not see a sign of Frank Rolfe and his victim. Nearer and nearer came the pursuers—but then the foremost boat reached the shore. With a wild yell the Indians sprung to it from the canoe. As they did so, Mahaca and Gustave rose and fired. Two of the Indians fell, one shot through the body, the other through the head. In a moment the other party were on the shore, but the other Indians were already far off in the woods, bounding away like deer, pursued by hounds. But ere they fled, one shout came back:

"Miontic will be revenged."

"Here's some satisfaction," growled Ralph, as he gave one of the dead Indians a kick. "We've fixed two of the red niggers. By thunder, they were about as bad scalded as the nigger was."

The lives of a thousand Indians would not atone for the loss of Mignonette," said Eugene sadly. "But we lose time; let us move on. Francis is undoubtedly miles ahead of us now."

"We left that rascally nigger behind, didn't we?" said Gus at that moment.

"Yes, but I told your father to give him the oldest boat and some provisions, and to start him down the river, without arms," said Eugene. "He is a poor brute, and beneath our vengeance."

Leaving the Indians dead on the beach, for the wolf or the crow to dispose of, the party now pushed off, and one boat taking each side of the river, so as not to pass anything unseen, they hurried along on their mission. But before they started, they stove in and sunk the boat which the Indians had been obliged to leave.

On, on they went, carefully examining the mouth of each creek—not stopping for noon—not pausing until the shadows of night began to creep over the form of the dying day. Then a halt was called, and a consultation held. It was determined that the boat should keep on all night, and the canoe remain where it was, so that if the boat should pass Rolfe in the night, the canoe might not be ahead and miss him in the daytime. Little did poor Eugene think that each stroke of the oar, each moment of time carried him further and further from her whom he so much loved and so deeply mourned. Yet so it was.

A place of meeting was decided upon down the Wyoming valley, where if the pursued was not sooner overtaken, the leading boat was to wait for the canoe.

On the night of the second day, both the boat and the canoe were at the rendezvous, but no

tidings of Rolfe or the lost Mignonette could be had. So steadily and rapidly had they come, that it did not seem possible that one person could have kept ahead of them, nor did it seem probable that the villain could have endured to pull fast so far without pausing to rest. And now for the first time did the thought, that he might have gone up the river, come before them. Mahaca was the first to speak of it, for he seemed to feel sure that they must have overtaken the other canoe, had it come down the river, or at least seen some sign of it.

Even a glimpse of hope that this might be so, entered the heart of Eugene, but he well knew that it would take them at least four days to go up the distance against the current, which they came down in two, and his heavy heart sunk within him when he thought of the fearful advantage which six days' start would give his brother, if he had taken that course.

Having left such word with the sympathizing settlers as would insure the detention of Rolfe and the recapture of his wife if they were seen there, and also hired a party to go a day's journey still further down the river, Eugene and his party, on the third morning, started on their return up the river.

It was near sunset of that day, when tired and worn out they were debating if it were not better to land and encamp. They were close in by the shore, and above them a dark and frowning precipice rose almost perpendicularly. It was crowned with laurels and hemlocks, and back from it even still higher rose rugged and almost inaccessible mountains. And suddenly a yell came ringing from the crest of the precipice, shrill and loud like that of the eagle when it seeks its prey, and is about to swoop down upon it. Involuntarily they suspended rowing and looked up.

For an instant the form of an Indian was seen, and a shout heard. His words were:

"Miontic goes to sharpen his knife and blacken his face. Miontic knows his foes and will drink their blood."

Mahaca was on his feet in an instant, but ere he could raise his gun, the Indian had disappeared, and his shrill yell was heard far back in the impervious forest.

The Indian had evidently only got this far on his back track from his unsuccessful expedition. He undoubtedly did not find it so easy or such rapid traveling through the thick woods, over the high and rocky mountains, and down the dark and dangerous ravines as it would have been had he been on the river as before.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ONEONTA TO THE RESCUE.

ALTHOUGH it was very tiresome to propel his canoe alone up the swift stream and over the many rapids which he met, Frank Rolfe, impelled by the fear of pursuit and a desire to get his victim beyond the reach of assistance, made no stop until the sun was far down in the western sky. He had passed the Chenango and several other confluent streams, but on—he kept through the day, until he was so tired that he could scarcely raise the paddle.

Then seeing a small creek which wound its way out of a dark glen from the southward by the foot of a rocky hill, he turned to the shore, and mooring his canoe, prepared to camp. And here for the first time he removed the gag from the mouth of poor Mignonette and loosened the bands upon her limbs, although he did not remove them. At first she could not speak at all. Noticing this, he gave her some water, and then taking some of the skins which he had stolen from the wigwam of Mahaca and placing them under a thick-leaved hemlock, he bore her from the boat and laid her upon them.

"Oh, for heaven's sake have mercy upon me, and take me back to my husband. He will forgive all—he will reward you," moaned poor Mignonette.

"I'm sorry that I can't accommodate you. You see I've been in love with you myself for some time. I love you in about the same proportion that I hate him."

Poor Mignonette made no reply, but the tears which rolled down her cheeks told her agony.

Building a small fire, Rolfe proceeded to cook some of the venison which he had stolen from the wigwam of Mahaca. Some of this he offered to Mignonette, but she refused to touch it. He, however ate heartily.

After he had finished his meal, Francis arose and again turned toward Mignonette, evidently intending to renew his taunts. He rested one arm against the tree near which she was seated, and was about to speak, when suddenly the whiz of an arrow was heard, and the arm of the wretch was literally pinned to the tree.

At the same moment the prow of an Indian canoe touched the shore and Oneonta, the daughter of Mahaca, bounded from it. An arrow was drawn to the head and pointed toward Rolfe as she approached him.

"For the Lord's sake spare me," he cried, cowering before her fierce look and threatening hand.

"Pale-face coward—you shall die. But I'll help the lily first," said the Indian maiden, haughtily, turning to render assistance to poor Mignonette.

"Saved—saved!" she cried, hysterically. "Where is my husband—where is Eugene?"

"The husband of the lily seeks her far down the river!" replied the Indian maiden, keeping her eye on Rolfe to see that he made no attempt at escape.

"And are you alone—who guided you to my rescue?"

"I came alone—the Great Spirit was my guide," replied the maiden.

"Oh, thank Heaven that you are here! You came only just in time to save me from that vile wretch," murmured Mignonette, as she looked shudderingly toward the wounded villain.

"How shall I kill him? Burn him, or with the arrow or my hatchet?" said Oneonta, glancing at Rolfe with a look which told her readiness to use either of those methods to send him to join his Satanic majesty below.

"I know not what to do—had you slain him at first I could not have blamed you," said Mignonette. "It seems wrong to kill him in cold blood. He is my husband's brother even though he is a villain."

"He is a snake. When Indian meet snake, he kills him," replied Oneonta.

"Not harmless ones. He is wounded—we can take possession of his arms and sink his boat—he cannot follow us then!" said Mignonette, who, soft-hearted and woman-like, was ready to forgive him who would have no mercy on her, now that she saw he was helpless.

"Oneonta will do her sister's bidding," said the Indian maiden. "But the pale-face is bad; he ought to die."

"I know it—but let not his blood be upon our hands," said Mignonette. "God will yet punish him. We will destroy his boat; he dare not return to our settlement. But let us return there, quickly, for my husband will die without me even as I should have done without him."

Francis Rolfe, who had been an anxious listener to all this conversation, discerned with anxiety the preparations made by the Indian maiden for their departure. He tried to tear his wounded arm away from the arrow, but the pain of even moving it was so intense that he desisted. Not until he saw Oneonta disable his own canoe by cutting a hole in its bottom, and pushing it out to float down upon and sink in the rapid stream, after which she took his arms and laid them in her own canoe, did he speak. Then, in a piteous tone, he cried:

"Mignonette, for Heaven's sake make that squaw release me from this position. Do not leave me here to perish by inches."

"Let him stay for crow to eat," said Oneonta, scornfully.

"I have done wrong, been very wicked," groaned Rolfe. "I never will trouble you more, only make her take this arrow out. I cannot remove it myself."

Again the woman in Mignonette prevailed, and first prudently so arranging the canoe in which she was, so that she could instantly push it from the shore, she directed Oneonta to release him.

This the Indian girl did, but with no very good grace, nor did she offer to aid him in stanching the wound which now bled profusely, until Mignonette asked her to bind it up. Misled by this unexpected kindness, Rolfe thought he could presume further and ask for his arms. Knowing that the possession of these would place her life and that of Oneonta in his power, she refused.

"But I will perish for want of food unless I have my gun to kill game!" pleaded Rolfe.

"Eat chestnut and acorn like hog," said Oneonta, scornfully.

Again and again Rolfe pleaded for his weapons, but all in vain; and his cries still sounded fainter and fainter upon their ears, as the happy Mignonette and her brave rescuer floated down the stream.

"How came you, my noble Oneonta, to follow me, while my husband went the other way?" asked Mignonette, after they were out of hearing of the wretched man.

"Oneonta felt sad for the loss of the lily. Her father was gone with the lily's husband,

and Oneonta went to see if all was well in her father's wigwam. There she saw the pale-face had been; she saw his track—it pointed up the river, and she followed it," replied Oneonta quietly, as if she had done nothing extraordinary.

After they had descended the river some sixteen or eighteen miles, Oneonta spoke to Mignonette.

"We come long way to-day. 'Spouse we camp and rest. Hungry too, me think."

To this proposition, wearied as she was, and knew that the girl must be, Mignonette made no opposition. They therefore landed in a little cove, and within the close protection of some dwarf pines, Oneonta built a fire and prepared some food, of which they both partook heartily. Then the Indian girl spread a couch of skins upon the ground near the fire, and both of them slept sweetly and soundly, side by side, until the morning's sun shone upon their upturned faces. Then they arose, and after a hasty meal again entered their canoe and speeded rapidly down the river. Before noon Mignonette was in the arms of her glad parents, who, not knowing whither Oneonta had gone, had feared that she, too, was lost. It would be no easy task to describe the feelings of joy and gratitude which overflowed their hearts when they clasped her to their swelling bosoms.

The first thought of Mignonette was to follow her husband down the river that she might the sooner give him the joyous news of her rescue from her own lips. But this was most strenuously opposed by her parents, who, knowing nothing of what had happened down the river, feared that the Indians might still be lurking in the neighborhood. It was with great difficulty that they could induce her to remain. As it was, her gaze was constantly turned down the river in the direction from whence she expected he would come.

It was not until the fifth day after her return that her eyes were gladdened by the sight of the boats coming up the river. With a wild cry of gladness she hastened down to the river-side to meet him, and as her little and graceful form bounded along, it was seen and recognized by those who so sadly returned from their fruitless search. Then, quick as the sun flashing out from behind some temporary cloud which has obscured it, their gloom was changed to joy. A shrill, glad shout rose from their lips, which rung from shore to shore of the river, echoing far back among the hills.

In a few moments husband and wife were clasped in each other's arms, and tears rolled down their cheeks—tears of joy which was speechless.

"Why, what's the matter o' you, father?" cried Jennie to Red Ralph, who was wiping his eyes with his rough coat-sleeve. "As sure as I live, I believe you're crying."

"No, I ha'n't—it's nothin', gal—only you see I'm a leetle dry," said the old man, trying to subdue his emotions. "Find me some rum, gal."

Some minutes elapsed before Mignonette was sufficiently composed to relate how she had escaped.

"By Jove, Oneonta is a queen!" shouted Gustave, when he had heard the narration. "If she'll have a wild devil like me, I'll marry her in a moment."

"Let us all go to the house, and get refreshments first," cried Eugene, "we all stand in need of it."

They all coincided in this announcement, and its necessity.

The meeting of Mahaca and Oneonta was cold and calm as usual; yet a close observer could have seen a gleam of pride lighting the dark eyes of the stern and stoical father as he heard praises showered upon his brave and beautiful daughter. And now once more the joyous laugh, the cheerful jest, and the sweet sound of music was heard beneath the roof of the log-house, and before the great fire, joints of venison, wild turkeys and ducks, were seen roasting. And thus having them once more in the sunlight, we'll look after our interesting friend Frank Rolfe.

CHAPTER XIX.

CRIME'S RETRIBUTION.

AFTER Oneonta and Mignonette had left Francis Rolfe, the latter gathered wood with his well hand to replenish the fire, for the howling of the wolf and the scream of the panther did not fall pleasantly upon the ear of the unarmed man.

After he had increased his fire, he cast himself down upon a bearskin, but the pain in his wounded arm was so intense that he could not sleep. In the morning he arose feverish and

sick, and gathered all the fragments of food which remained from the night before, for he well knew that he would need it.

He was undecided what course to take.

At last his mind was made up, and judging of his course by the shape of the river he struck off in a southwesterly direction, hoping to fall in with it again somewhere in the vicinity of Wyoming, from which place he could return by water to his home in Virginia.

His arm was very painful, but on he pushed, only stopping occasionally to quench his thirst at some rushing stream, and to take a bite of his scanty provision. When night approached, he was in terror and discomfort, for he had no means of striking fire, and the nights were getting quite cold.

He supped sparingly, and then finding a tree with a crotch close to the ground, he managed to crawl up into it, and to lash himself there, so as to keep from falling. Wretchedly did the miserable man pass the night. The wild beasts scented him, and their howls and screams filled his soul with terror.

To sleep was impossible. More than once he cursed the mad folly which had led him upon his useless expedition, but his repentance was in vain; he had drawn the punishment of his crime upon himself.

In this manner he spent two days and nights; each day bringing its trials and tribulations, each night its alarms and apprehensions.

Noon of the third day found him crawling up the side of a mountain, weak, hungry and almost dying from thirst. As he reached the summit he saw a sight which for a moment renewed hope within his sinking heart. It was several columns of smoke which ascended from a valley below him, denoting either a settlement of whites, or an encampment of Indians. Weak, as he was, he struggled down the steep side of the mountain, at one time falling over huge rocks, at another pitching into dark ravines. But at last he found water, and bleeding from scratches, cuts and bruises, he threw himself into it. This alone saved him and enabled him some time in the night to reach an Indian camp-fire. No sooner had he seen human beings and felt the warm thrill of a fire-flame upon his miserable body, than he fell senseless upon the ground.

How long he lay thus he knew not, but it was daylight before he knew where he was. When he opened his eyes he saw the peaked roof of a bark wigwam over his head and an Indian standing by his side. As he tried to speak, the latter bent down over him and said:

"Ugh—pale-face, you know me?"

Rolfe looked up and saw that the speaker had but one eye and that a hideous scar, as of a scald or burn discolored and disfigured his face. "No, I do not know you!" he replied, "but be my friend and give me food and drink and I will reward you."

"Ugh! I am Miontic!" said the Indian. "Me lose one eye and two warriors for you. Me go back and have revenge—then me come back and burn you! You no fit to burn now, you too sick—you no feel pain, no scream to make squaw laugh—no dance to make warrior laugh."

"Good Miontic, I did not know you."

"Me no good Miontic," said the Indian. "Me bad Miontic. Me go an' kill 'em all. Then come back and burn you!"

"No, Miontic is wise. He wants guns and powder to arm all his warriors; he wants knives to scalp his enemies with, and he wants rum to make his heart glad," said Rolfe, faintly. "I am rich—if Miontic will go with me or send a messenger, I will make him rich too."

"Ugh! me think!" said the Indian, turning away and leaving the wigwam. He soon returned with some food and drink for Rolfe, and then spoke more kindly.

He stood for some time and watched Rolfe, as he almost ravenously devoured the food set before him. Seeing the wound on Rolfe's arm he dressed it—applying some herbs which he had pounded up. This done, he again resumed his thoughtful attitude. After some time he looked at Rolfe and said:

"How much you give Miontic for all the scalps of the party we go after the other day? How much gun and powder and lead and rum?"

"Five guns and their ammunition for every scalp, and a canoe load of rum," replied Rolfe, whose hatred and hellishness was renewed with his returning strength.

"Good. We kill 'em all," said the Indian—his eye sparkling with exultant light. "Get pay for my eye, my two warriors! Ugh—Miontic big warrior yet."

"I don't want you to kill *all*—let one of them live, the husband of the pale-faced squaw."

"Ugh! Why do you want him live?"

"Because I hate him. Kill all the rest, his wife and all, but let him live. I'll give you a nice two barreled gun besides five single ones in place of his scalp."

"Good. It shall be as my brother wishes," said the Indian.

"When will you go?" said Rolfe.

"To-day: my warriors are ready now. They are hungry for blood."

"Can I go with you?"

"No. You weak, all the same like pappoose! No, you stay here—me go and kill 'em and bring you scalps. You stay; squaw feed you and make you strong."

Rolfe could not but accede to the wisdom of this arrangement, for he was almost entirely helpless; and besides he had had enough of adventure lately to satisfy even his dark and wild nature.

Before noon he saw the ferocious Miontic depart at the head of nearly one hundred warriors, whose painted faces and wild yells announced that they were about to take the war-path.

CHAPTER XX.

A SAD CONCLUSION.

SOME days had passed since the return of the party to the house of Mr. Minier, and no signs of danger had been seen by any of that party.

Ralph and his daughter Jennie had determined to go back and make arrangements to return in the spring with the whole family and more settlers if they could get them to come. Also to bring agricultural implements which would be required, and horses and cattle. Mr. Minier had written to several old Huguenot friends, whom he hoped to induce to join him, and Ralph was to carry these letters.

The only thing of which our new settlers were particularly in need, was salt to cure their provisions, and though a little could be bought once in a while from the few Indians who visited them, they would not tell where it could be found. No bribe could induce them to reveal their secret, for they acknowledged that there was a salt spring not far off; they said the Great Spirit would be angry should they show it to the pale-face.

Within about two weeks after their return down the river, Ralph and his daughter with many presents and the grateful blessings of Mr. Minier and his party took an almost tearful leave and started on their return voyage.

It was about noon on the day after Ralph had departed, that an Indian came on foot to the house, offering various articles for sale, wishing to exchange them for tobacco. Among the articles were several baskets and in one of these was some salt. Eugene, who was the only man at home, Gustave and his father being away with Mahaca, fishing, wished to purchase this. The Indian refused, but after much persuasion said in his broken English, "Yes, me sell 'em—me go and get more."

"If you show me where to get more I'll give you a new gun and plenty of tobacco," said Eugene.

Had he noticed the quick look of pleasure which passed over the Indian's face at that moment he might have had some suspicions aroused that all was not right. But he did not.

"Where other pale-face?" asked the Indian after a few moments' reflection.

"Gone fishing. They will be back to-night or before," replied Eugene.

"You give gun and go see spring now?" asked the Indian.

"Yes I will!" said Eugene, jumping at the long wished for opportunity.

"And no tell other pale-face where to find spring?" continued the Indian.

"Not if you wish me to keep the secret," replied Eugene.

"Good. Give me gun, give me tobac, me go now," said the Indian.

Fearing that he would recall his promise, Eugene hastened to procure the articles and prepared for the journey which the Indian said would be made long before the sun went down.

"Eugene, do not go with the Indian alone—I do not like his looks," murmured Mignonette, clinging to her husband. "He seems too willing to go—they have always refused before."

"But look what a bribe I have offered him, dearest. Be in no fear, he is but one, and I am well armed."

"But at least wait for Gustave."

"No, that would not do—the Indian would recede from his agreement, and this secret is very important to us!"

So saying, Eugene departed, but tears were trickling down the fair cheeks of her whom he loved, when he left her.

The Indian struck off at a rapid pace toward the north, followed by Eugene. He went about two miles, and pausing near the dry and splintered stump of a fallen hemlock, he said:

"Wait, me make fire and light pipe. Injun love smoke tobac."

To this Eugene made no objection, and soon the Indian struck a fire from which he lighted a pipe. And soon the whole stump was in a blaze, sending up first a column of thick heavy smoke, which however disappeared as soon as the whole was in a light clear blaze.

Eugene did not know enough of Indian tactics to be aware that by sudden smoke the Indians frequently made intelligent signals to each other. Perhaps if he had he would have had no suspicion in this case, for the desire of the Indian to light his pipe was very natural, and to do so he had to strike fire with flint and steel in the tinderlike punk of the dry stump which was on fire in a moment.

After he had lighted his pipe, the Indian sat down and smoked it all out before he renewed his journey and then he did not seem in such haste as before. Eugene hurried him all that he could, but when the sun was just sinking in the west, they had not yet reached the spot.

"Are we not nearly there?" asked Eugene of the Indian.

"Yes—me find 'em by an' by," said the Indian, who now frequently looked back, apparently to see if they were followed.

The sun had just sunk from sight; the gray of twilight was beginning to show, when a dense cloud of smoke arose from the direction of the mouth of the stream, up the banks of which they had traveled. Eugene paused to look at it, and as he turned to do so, the Indian suddenly sprang into a thicket on the right, with a loud taunting yell, and in an instant was out of sight.

For a moment Eugene was astounded, by this sudden and singular action, and then a new thought entered his head, as he gazed back toward the smoke. It was in the very direction of the house. He had perhaps purposely been drawn away from their protection, whom he loved more than life. The thought was horror. He remembered Miontic's threat of revenge.

He turned, and with a speed which would have tired the hunted stag, he bounded down the stream. Darkness came, but neither that, nor rocks, nor fallen logs, nor thorny thickets stopped him in his mad career. On—on—on he bounded, and while yet lurid flames were bursting from the home which he so lately had left, he reached the edge of the woods and saw them.

With a wild yell of rage and of despair, he rushed toward the burning house. Before he reached it, he stumbled over a corpse and fell—he arose and looked, it was the brave Mahaca, murdered and scalped. Near him lay two dead Indians, and by one of them lay poor Oneonta, her long scalp tress shorn like that of her father! On a little further lay Gustave and Mr. Minier, close by the door.

"Where, oh where is Mignonette?" shrieked Eugene.

He rushed up to the flaming house—the door was open, but most of the roof had fallen in, and it was fully on fire everywhere.

What did he see which brought forth such a cry of horror? Close by the door, her scalped head outside, lay his mother-in-law, her feet and body all aglow with fire, and further in, oh madness for him to look upon, roasting and crisping, was the dear form of his Mignonette.

What cared he for the fire and flame then? With one bound he was by the side of his dead and burning wife, his right arm clasped the lifeless body, the next instant he had borne it out in the open air.

"Merciful God!" he groaned, as with glaring eyes he looked upon the scarred and blackened flesh—"Mignonette, why did I leave thee? Oh God have mercy on me."

A wild yell of exultation rose from the river; he raised his eyes and saw a fleet of canoes filled with Indians departing, but he heeded them not; he knelt there beside his dead wife, and moaned in tearless agony.

It was after midnight when two persons landed and came hurriedly and stealthily toward the spot where he still was kneeling. The flickering embers of the fire cast an uncertain light upon the objects around, and those who came could see the corpse of the slain.

"Gal—gal, we're too late," said one of the persons hurriedly, and with a choking voice—"they're all killed!"

"False! false as hell!" shouted Eugene—"Mignonette lives—lives—ha! ha!" And he

sprung to his feet, but the next instant fell senseless to the ground.

Eugene did not recover consciousness until the next morning, and then he looked calmly, with deathlike quiet on the dead bodies. Though his face was badly burned, and the right arm and hand which had dragged her from the flame were burned as red as the fire itself, he did not complain. He paid but little heed to the lamentations of Jennie, or the rude words of comfort with which Ralph tried to console him. He only smiled, when Ralph indignantly pitched the bodies of the two hostile Indians who had been killed into the fire. When Ralph proposed to bury the rest, he assented, but took no part in the painful task.

It was full noon, when beneath a tree, beside the river, in one large grave all five of the bodies were gently laid by Ralph and Jennie. After the last sod had been laid upon the mound, which covered their remains from his sight, Ralph and Jennie tried to induce Eugene to enter their boat, and leave the spot with them.

"No," he cried, lifting his red and swollen hand toward the sky, "I swear never to have another home but by her grave, save when I go to take vengeance on her murderers. And never—never, will I spare a red-man's life again. Go, Ralph, go, leave me to myself."

"No, we cannot, and thus alone and injured," cried Jennie.

"No, blast me if I can!" said Ralph, rubbing his rough sleeve over his face.

"You must!" said Eugene, calmly—"but first tell me if you know who did this deed?"

"We do, for they passed us and in vain we strained every nerve to warn you in time," said Ralph. We had to hide—they were so close to us that they could almost have touched us with their guns. There were one hundred of them.

"Was my brother, the accursed fiend, with them?"

"No—they were led by Miontic. I knew the cuss, though your wife had scalded one of his eyes out, and made his face look like a half-fried piece of tripe."

"One eye lost and his face scarred, you say?"

"Yes, master Eugene."

"It is well, I shall remember him! Now go, good Ralph, and do not let them harm you! Go and return in the spring—you will find me here by her grave if they have not killed me before. If I am not here, count the scalps which will be nailed to yonder tree!"

Ralph and his daughter found it useless to urge him further, and more sadly and tearfully than before, they left the memorable spot.

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